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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COSMETIC SURGERY

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ABSTRACT

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Role of Social Media for Cosmetic Surgery

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Any modern company that desires to be well connected with its customers has to have a well organised and carefully planned social media presence. A well planned and executed social media presence can be a versatile tool and an essential asset for the company. Using social media as a marketing and a communications tool a company can engage its customers, improve the company's image and transparency, amongst countless other possible uses.

However a poorly executed social media presence can cause havoc on the company's credibility and image in just a few seconds or minutes due to the fast-paced nature of things spreading through and staying on the Internet. Therefore companies should not only plan to how to use this powerful and versatile medium, but also plan how not to use it. And additionally take precautions if the worst should happen, so the damage caused could be minimised.

This thesis is made for Company X, one of the leading providers of cosmetic surgery in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this thesis is to assess the current usage of Company X's and its competitors' usage of social media. And then by using the findings from the assessment and general marketing principles, developing methods or guidelines on how Company X could make the most of their social media presence.

Key words: cosmetic surgery, social media, management, branding, marketing

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Company X

Company X is one of the leading cosmetic surgery providers in UK. They offer a wide range of procedures from surgical to non-surgical; from breast augmentations and liposuctions to less invasive facial peels and dermatological treatments.

1.2 Purpose of the Thesis: Research Objectives

Company X, like almost every other provider of cosmetic surgery have a social media presence on the main social platforms. The purpose of this thesis is to provide Company X with additional ideas on how to develop and plan their usage of social media. As the amount of research on this subject is limited, the research will be carried out by comparing the usage of Company X's and its main competitors' social media presences and making conclusions based thereof and by utilising the theoretical material available online and offline. These conclusions will be derived from what each company is doing, and how well they are doing it, and most importantly in which way do they utilise their social media. And if there are any possible improvements and utilisations that Company X could take advantage of with their social media presence. In addition to this comparing assessment, expert guides and recommendations will be applied as well.

From Company X's social media channels, a few posts will be selected for closer examination to generally assess them or to pinpoint some possible issues. Then the same will be done for three relevant competitors, and conclusions and recommendations will be made based on the findings.

The main research questions for the thesis to answer are:

How can Company X improve their social media presence?

In which ways can social media be used for a cosmetic surgery company?

What does cosmetic surgery as a field of business presents in terms of challenges and special considerations for social media usage?

2 COMPANY X'S SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

2.1 Key figures

	Facebook Likes	Facebook Reviews	Facebook Review Score	Twitter Followers	Tweets	Following on Twitter	Instagram Followers	Following on Instagram	Instagram Posts
Mar-15	8129	100	4.7	1658	1141	501	0	0	0
Jan-16	9498	141	4.5	1995	1582	522	403	236	90
Change %	16.8	41.0	-4.3	20.3	38.7	4.2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Change n	1369	41	-0.2	337	441	21	403	236	90

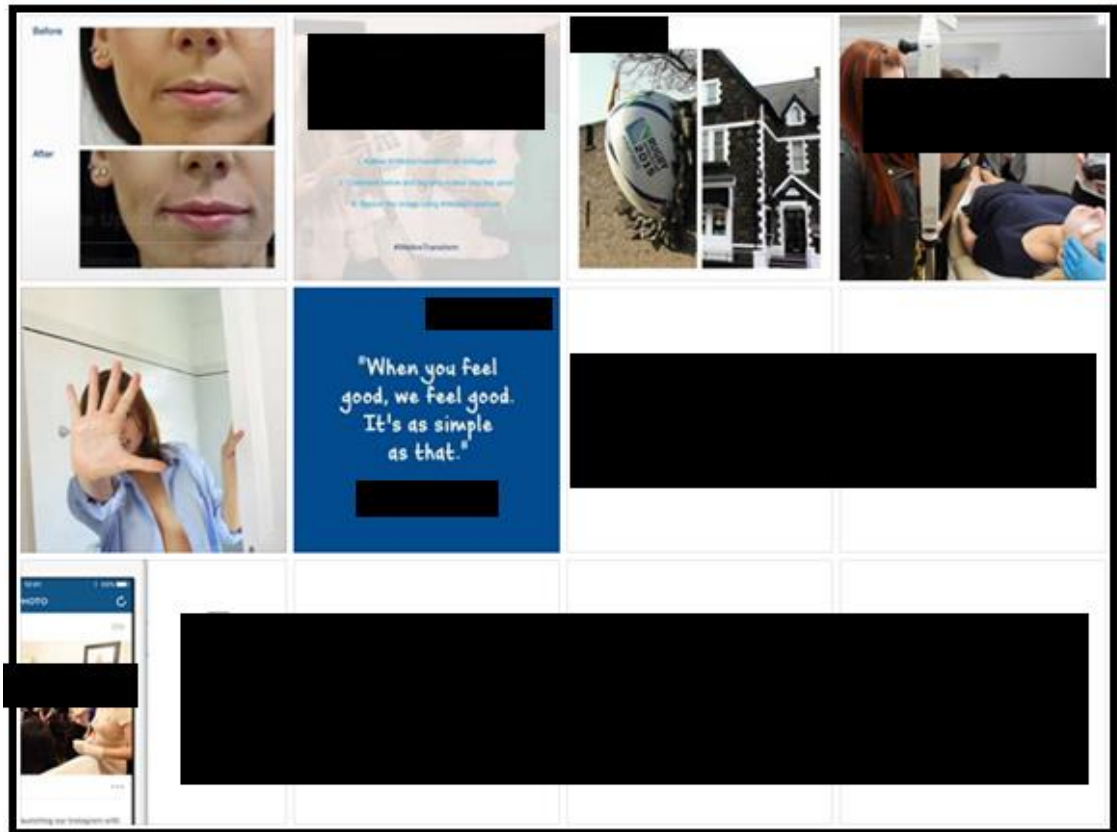
FIGURE 1. Company X's key social media figures

2.2 Main utilisations of the social media channels:

- Promotional
 - Promoting company events and the company itself
 - Promoting blogger content
 - Promoting the company's other social media platforms
 - Promoting expert commentaries in magazines
 - Company branding
- Informational
 - Before & After pictures: Breast Augmentations, rhinoplasty, liposuction, hair transplants, Botox
 - Beauty tips
- Entertainment
 - Celebrities' beauty regimes and tips
 - Seasonal greetings and wishes
- Competitions
 - Like, comment and share -type of competitions
- Communications
 - Direct messaging regarding questions, bookings, complaints

2.3 Analysis and examination of content

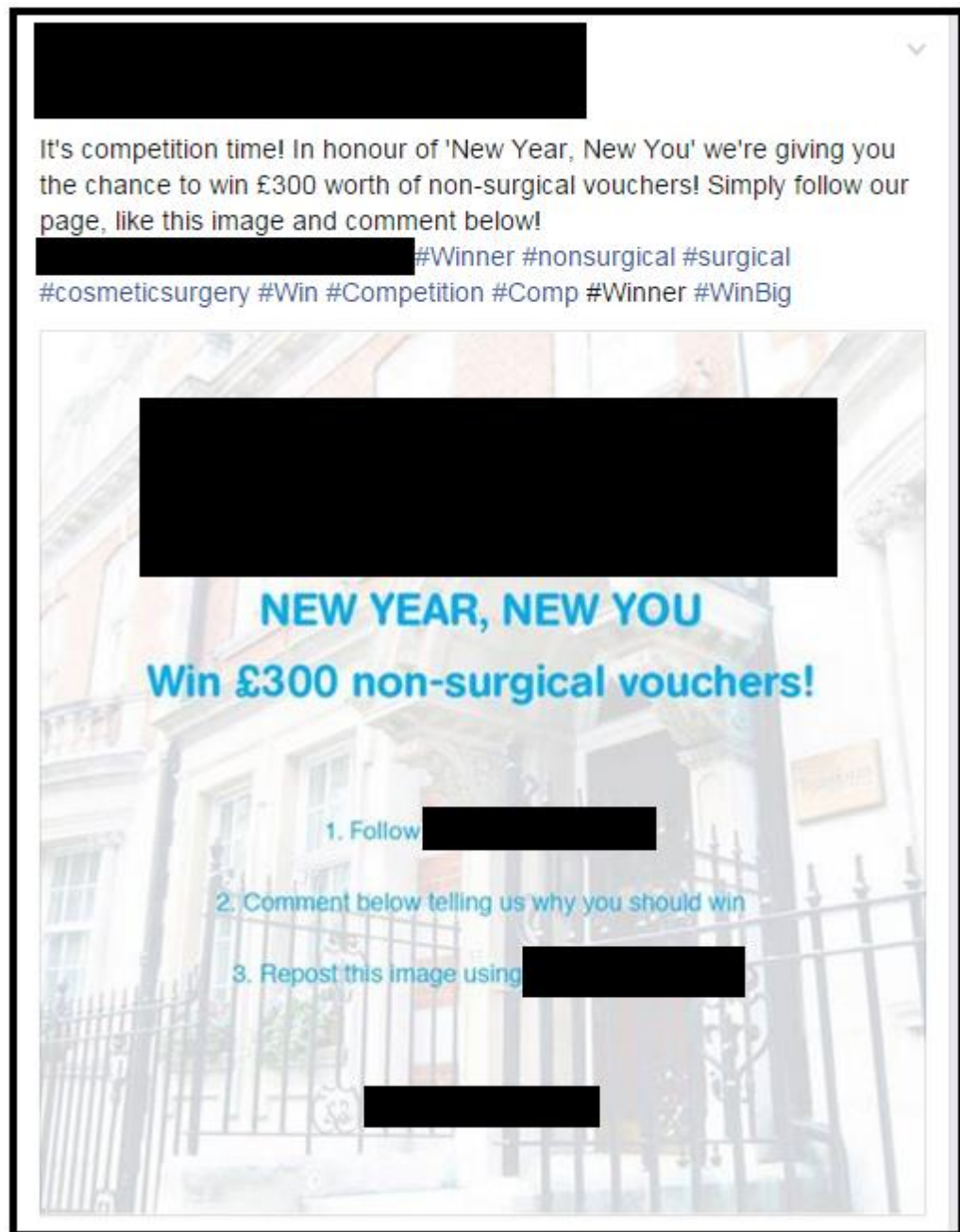
Company X's social media presence appears to be rather clinical visually. In terms of content, a lot of repetition can be noticed and the posts are visually really similar to one another. Company X's branding is strongly present in most of the photos used.



PICTURE 2. An overview of Company X's recent Facebook posts (January 2016)

In order to be able to examine Company X's social media usage more closely, a handful of example posts by Company X will be examined. The photos were selected based on their ability to demonstrate different features of what could be improved, and what kind of content or features are appropriate or appear to have a positive impact on the social media usage.

2.3.1 Example A: Confusing Posts



PICTURE 3. A screenshot of a Company X's Facebook competition post

The idea and the execution of the competition seems clear and simple: To gain more followers and engage them. The same picture was initially posted on Instagram, but the same photo was used in Facebook and this makes it slightly confusing in my opinion.

The reward for the competition itself is good, as non-surgical reward is the more accepted form of cosmetic procedures, where as it would not reflect well on the company's reputation and image of a responsible provider of cosmetic surgery if they were giving away free surgical procedures or discounts on such procedures. And as Company X wants to be perceived as a responsible company, this is well in the line of the company's principles.

Even so, for a Facebook page that has almost ten thousand followers the post's reach was slightly over a thousand, around the same than a picture of a celebrity has with no call to action. The actual competition had twelve participants on Facebook. It is safe to assume that out of almost ten thousand followers that Company X has, more than twelve would be willing to participate in a seemingly easy competition with the price worth £300. To me it seems like something has clearly gone wrong.

If the reach of the post was over a thousand, one might assume that if over a thousand Facebook users actually saw the post and read the competition rules, they would have more than twelve participants in the competition. The post reach in this case demonstrates in my opinion that most of the Facebook users that actually saw the post, they scrolled right past it without actually paying any attention to it due to the lack of engagements.

On Instagram, where the picture was obviously designed to be posted, Company X received 22 entries for the competition out of almost four hundred followers. This ratio of followers-to-entries is a lot better for Company X's somewhat new Instagram account, yet still not as good as it could be potentially.

By examining the post and the picture used in the post we can pinpoint some issues with it that could be improved:

- The image used was not clearly designed to be posted on Facebook, and it should not have been as it was
- On Facebook the post like many others posts by Company X is overwhelmed with hashtags, which make the post appear to be more of a spam post than it actually is (On Instagram this is somewhat more understandable in my opinion)
- While the picture used in the post is indeed of Company X's building, it does not have the eye-catching factor that is required when attention is what all the posts are competing on in social media

2.3.2 Example B: Offensive or Disturbing Visuals

In my opinion one has to consider what people want to see, but one also has to consider - especially with the photos the cosmetic surgery operation generates - what people maybe do not want to see.



PICTURE 4. A screenshot of a Facebook post by Company X that could be considered as visually unpleasant, offensive or disturbing to some

While some posts with pictures might provide insightful information for some, for the rest they might cause negative reactions and the utilisation of such pictures on Facebook especially is not hurtful just for the impressions of that one post, but for the other posts too (Facebook, 2014).

This example post of a before and after pictures of a breast lift could be considered as such. The post in particular had four negative feedbacks, two had selected the “Hide all posts” option and two had chosen the “Hide post” option.

Four people hiding the content does not mean that only four people will see less, but this also will mean that posts by a page that has had their posts hidden, will be shown less

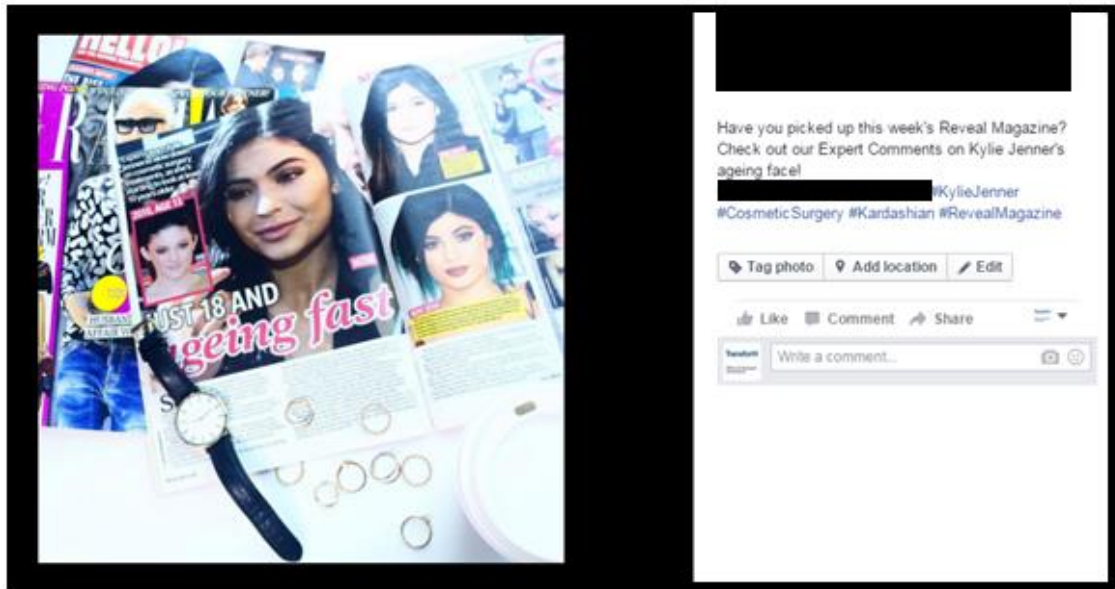
than they organically would appear on other people's News Feed (Facebook, 2014). This is due to the Facebook algorithm that tries to provide quality content based on other people's likes and dislikes and actions. The actions cannot be analysed in this case apart from the four people hiding the content. But one can assume that if such a picture is shown and quickly put away, Facebook will get the information that the page is posting something that people are not keen on seeing and this will affect every other post that Company X does in the future. Therefore even the tiniest amounts of negative actions on Facebook such as hide or unfollow have to be taken seriously, because a company cannot (yet) get all the data Facebook collects of its usage nor how the algorithm actually works in practice.

2.3.3 Example C: Posts without appeal or clear purpose

The following example post demonstrates a part of Company X's marketing mix to the social media user: Expert commentary and opinions in women's magazines regarding usually celebrities' possible cosmetic surgery operations.

While the actual expert commentary might in the magazine might be a well embedded advert for the company in the given article, mentioning about a comment in a magazine for the typical Facebook user might not be worth of much value in my opinion. According to Cari Bennette from Social Mouths posts should serve a purpose and the company should not just be "posting blindly", says Danny Wong from Shareaholic (2014). In my opinion this should mean either to inform or to entertain, or simply to promote something. However if Company X receives a monetary incentive from the magazines they mention, that would be the purpose of the post then. If not however, in my opinion it may not be worth making the posts less appealing to Facebook users and lowering the visibility of Company X's future Facebook posts any further due to the algorithm penalising the future posts (Facebook, 2014). Once again, this is due to the way the Facebook Algorithm works; trying to show quality content in people's News Feed.

Company X has a few posts of this kind and they are the posts with least engagements and actual impressions: The reach for these posts varies around 300 and 400 hundred.

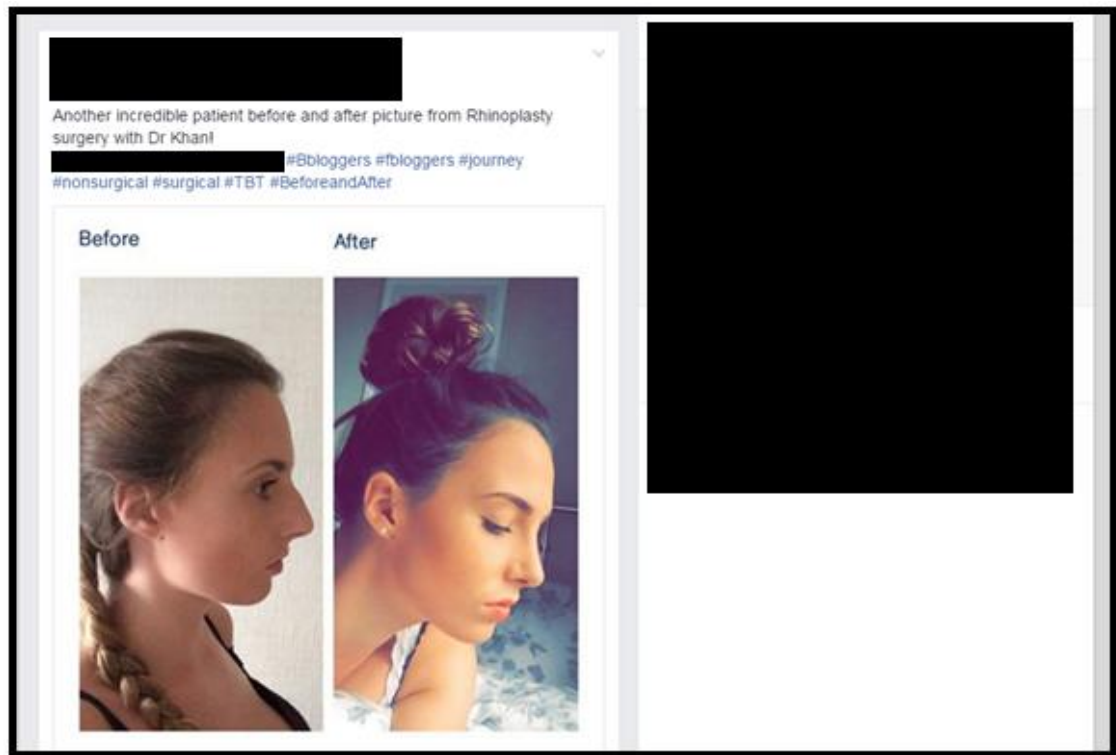


PICTURE 5. A screenshot of a Facebook post by Company X that showcases Company X's expert commentary in magazines

2.3.4 Example D: Visually appealing Before & After photos

This example post of a rhinoplasty patient has a good reach, and a good amount of engagements in comparison to other posts by Company X. Usually when a post by Company X gets a bigger reach, most of the posts have some negative engagements, and it does not seem to matter if it is organic reach or reach that is paid for through Facebook's Boost Post. But this post is a prime example, that one can get mostly or completely positive reactions.

In my opinion some before and after pictures can be somewhat controversial or vain, and therefore cause negative impressions or comments. But the girl in the pictures has had good results with the rhinoplasty and most likely feels a lot better about her appearance. And this is the "WOW"-factor in this post; the transformation of the patient through a rhinoplasty with really impressive results. In addition to the good results from the procedure, the appearance of the girl in the pictures can be classified as visually appealing and 'classy' without undermining the girl in my opinion, which adds further to the positive sides of the post.



PICTURE 6. Before and after pictures of a rhinoplasty patient

The only negative trait of this post is the usage of hashtags. Not only that there are too many of them making the post look cluttered, but the relevance of the hashtags is really debatable. Overusing hashtags and, hashtags that are not related to the actual post makes the poster seem desperate for extra traffic and attention – and demeans the quality of the otherwise such a well performing Facebook post. Molly McHugh from Digital Trends found that in Edgerank Checker’s report: “Posts with hashtags actually have less Viral Reach, on average, than posts without hashtags”. McHugh also found that due to Facebook’s privacy structure the usage of hashtags on Facebook makes them less useful than on Twitter for example.

The post used the following hashtags:

#Bbloggers

#fbloggers

#journey

#nonsurgical

#surgical

#TBT

#BeforeAndAfter

Using a unique hashtag that differentiates the company is acceptable and understandable in my opinion, as one might use the hashtag to search for patient stories, results or other material by the given company. Mentioning that it is a Before & After picture with a hashtag is also acceptable and desirable, as a potential customer who is interested in what kind of results one might achieve through cosmetic surgery might utilise these hashtags. And mentioning what kind of a procedure it was, is also desirable for the same reasons.

However, the rest of the tags are somewhat irrelevant or too vague, and affect the simplicity of the post unnecessarily.

As an example, the post would have had a better visual appeal, and the same performance, if not better, by using the three following and most relevant hashtags:

#Company X

#Rhinoplasty

#BeforeAndAfter

3 COMPETITOR'S SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

There are several companies in United Kingdom that offer cosmetic surgery in some form, but the following three competitors' social media presences were chosen for analysis: Competitor A and Competitor B due to the fact that with Company X they are the biggest providers of breast implants and have the biggest following on main social media channels – and Competitor C, due to the fact that despite its smaller size of operations the amount of followers and is considerably large - so they should be doing something right in engaging the users of social media.

The utilisations of the social media presences with their differences, strengths and weaknesses will be examined and compared. The main focus will be on Facebook, because it is the most popular platform and it plays a big role in engaging Company X's customers in my opinion.

In the following chapters the key figures, major features and differences in the utilisation of social media and the content will be assessed through observations. Different example posts by the companies will also be taken into a closer examination in order to pinpoint the different traits of what makes a good performing social media post and what could be improved or is straight-out hurtful to the companies.

3.1.1 Social media key figures

Competitor B has clearly the biggest following on Facebook, and in the comparison from March 2015 to January 2016 they have still managed to gain over 2300 followers, which is more than any of the other companies have. Company X had gained 1369 followers in this period on Facebook, whereas Competitor A gained 2069 and Competitor C gained a mere 372 followers.

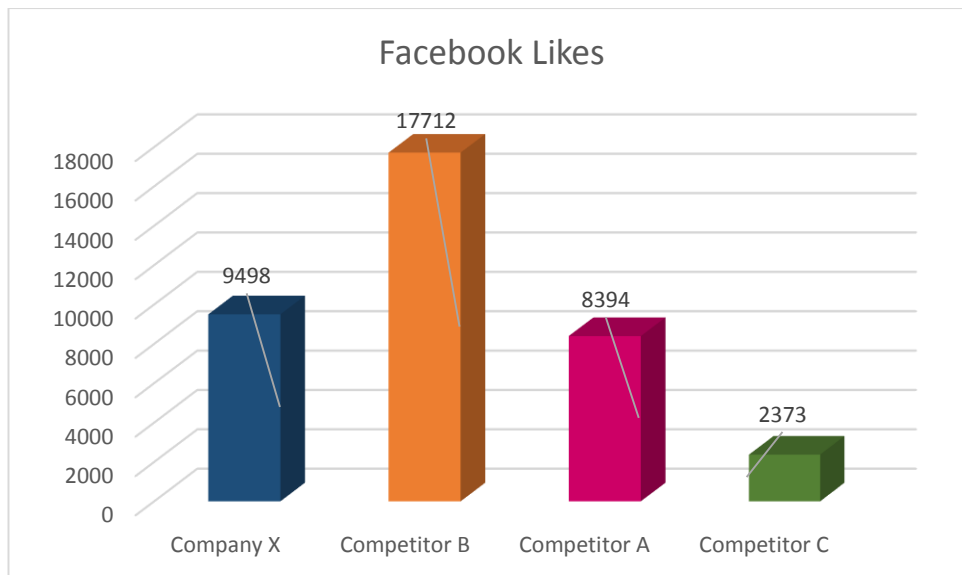


FIGURE 2. Facebook likes of Company X and its competition

By comparing the likes, and the increase in likes, only Competitor A has increased their following when comparing relatively; by 32.7 percent. Competitor B, despite the already numerous following managed to increase the followers by 14.9 percent. Competitor C however managed to get an 18.6 percent increase, which due to the company's relatively smaller Facebook following is not as impressive as Competitor A's or Competitor B's increase was. Company X's Facebook following was 8129 in March 2015 and Competitor A's 6325, but due to the increase Competitor A now has a bigger following on Facebook than Company X has.

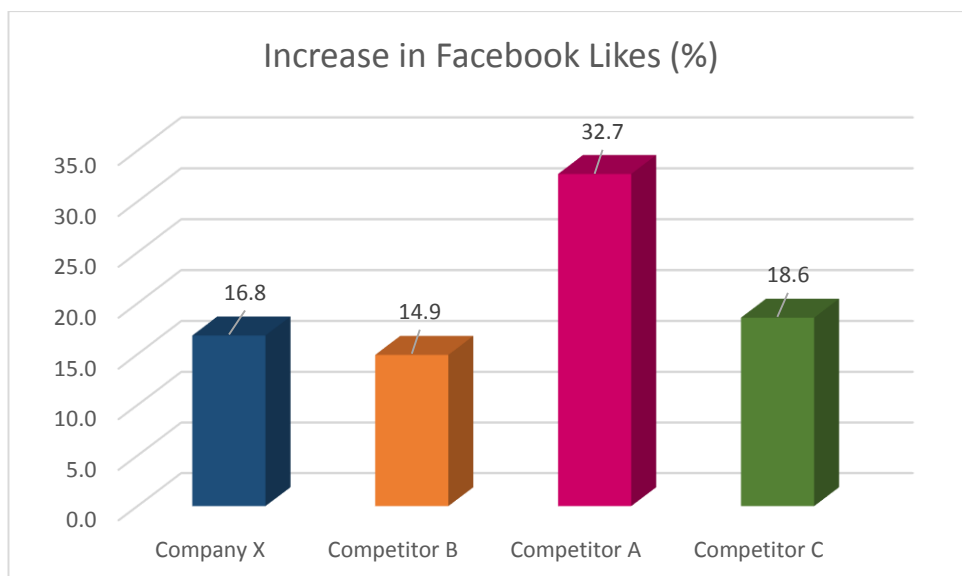


FIGURE 3. Increase in Facebook likes of Company X and its competition, by percentage

Competitor A and Competitor C dominate in the amount of followers on Twitter. In March 2015 Competitor C already had an impressive amount of Twitter followers: 3564.

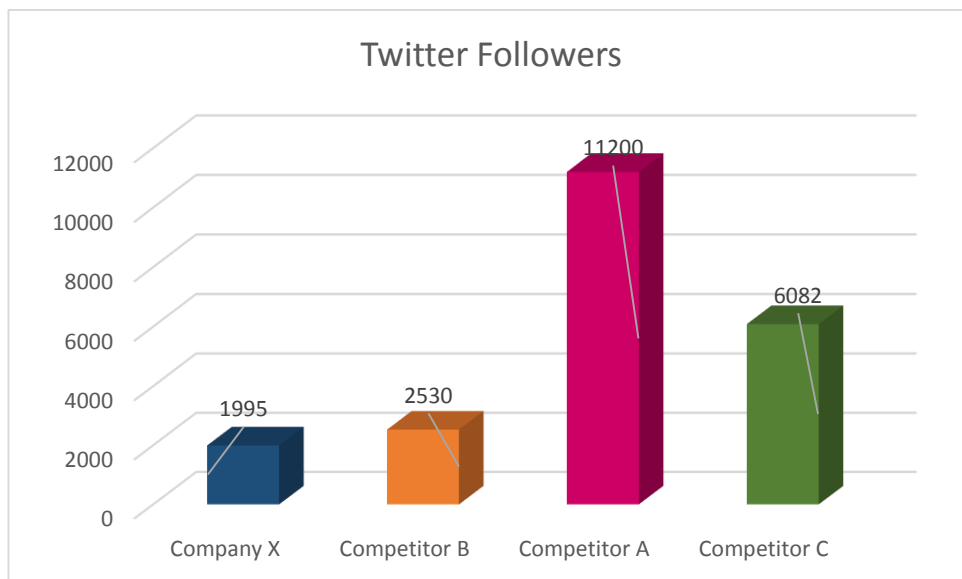


FIGURE 4. Twitter followers of Company X and its competition

Every company had managed to increase their Twitter followers by a fair amount, but Competitor C increased their Twitter following by an impressive 70.7%

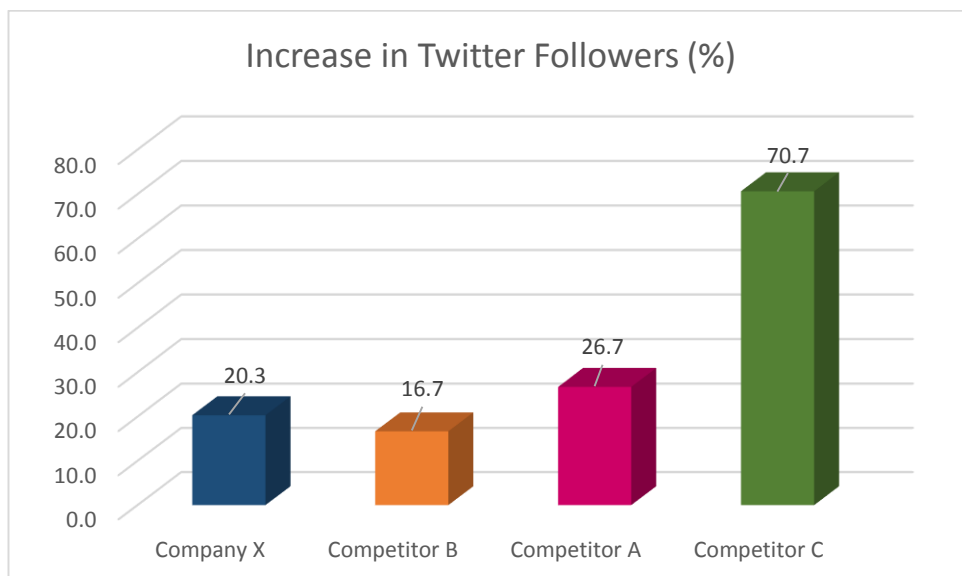


FIGURE 5. Twitter followers of Company X and its competition, by percentage

Instagram is a fairly new platform for companies to use, and in March 2015 Competitor A and Competitor C were the only companies with an actual presence on Instagram. Due to this no comparison can be properly made by demonstrating the growth percentages for Company X, which had no Instagram account at all, nor for Competitor B, which had an Instagram account with one follower and no posts. Instead, the increase by the plain number of users will be used to demonstrate the growth properly.

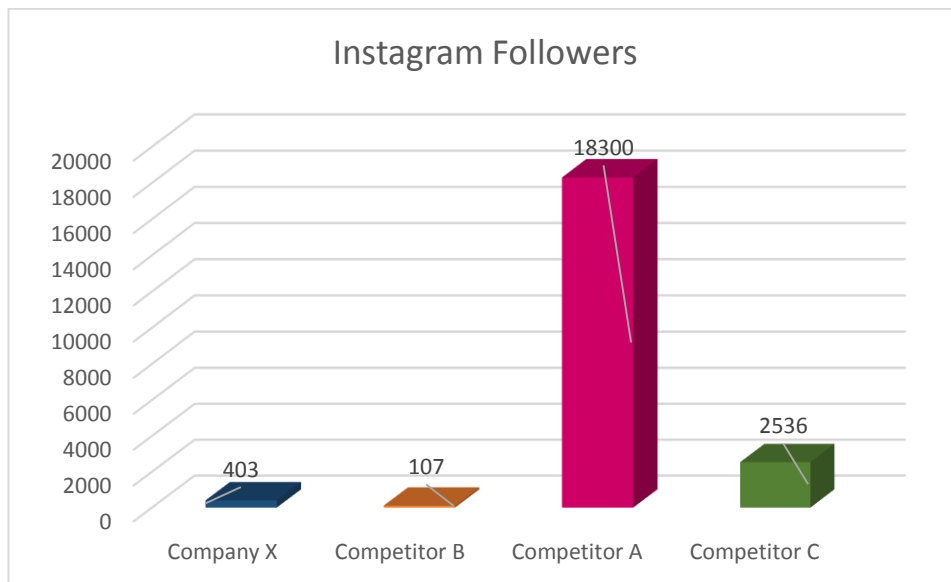


FIGURE 6. Instagram followers of Company X and its competition

As Instagram works and is used in a different manner than Facebook is, in my opinion the growth in followers can happen more exponentially; because the content gets more coverage through popular accounts and even complete strangers, as long as it is visually appealing or interesting and if hashtags are used correctly. This behaviour in the increase of followers can be seen for Competitor A.

Competitor A managed to increase their Instagram following by 6400 followers, which is more than the increase in following by Company X, Competitor B and Competitor C combined, and multiplied three times. This just shows the potential of exponential growth in followers on this platform. However, by examining Competitor A's Instagram account and what the actual likes and comments consist of; it can be seen that some of the engagements come from accounts trying to get followers themselves. Also a good portion of likes and comments are by male users, that quite likely are there just for the 'visual entertainment'. Therefore the actual value of these followers, likes and engagements for the business may not be as good as the initial figures might appear them to be.

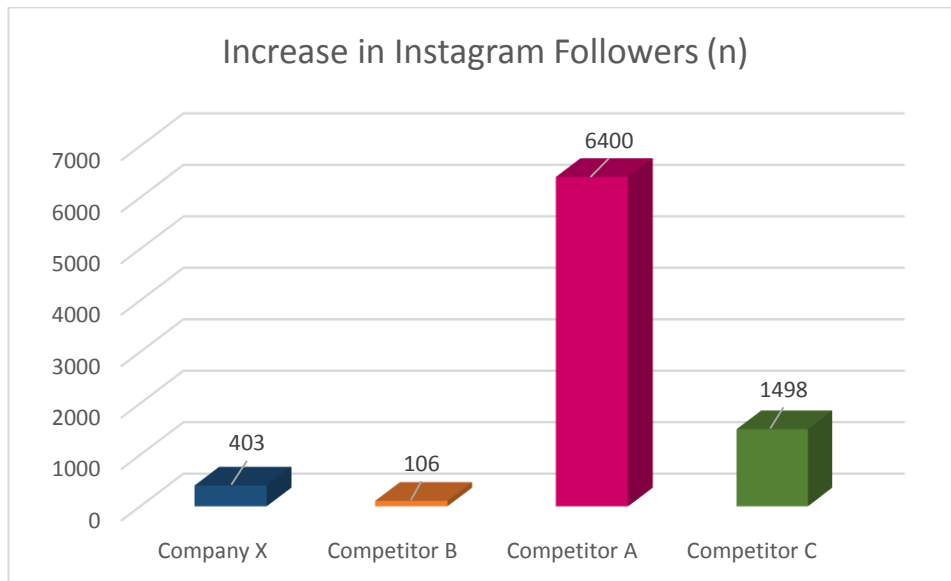


FIGURE 7. Increase Instagram followers of Company X and its competition

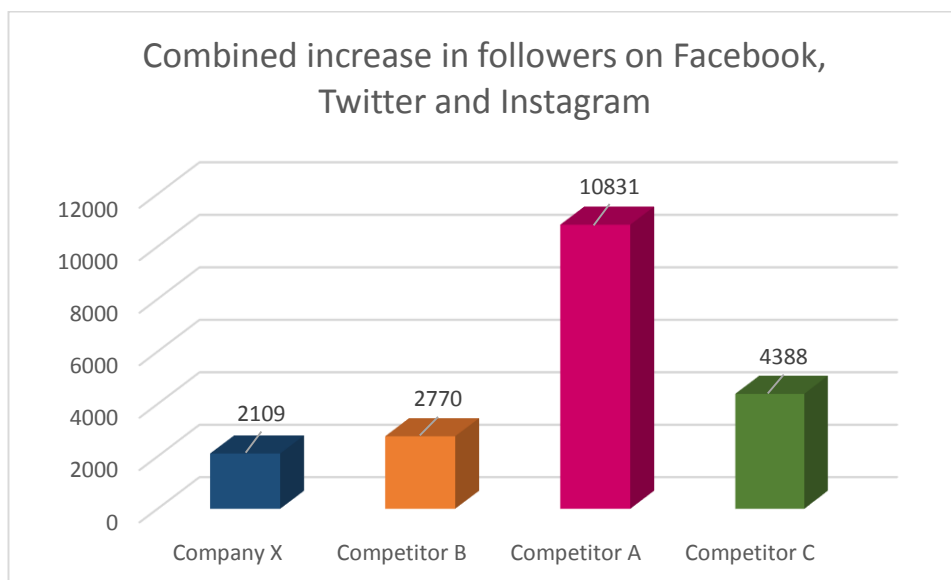


FIGURE 8. Combined increase in social following for Company X and its competition

3.2 Competitor A

	Facebook Likes	Facebook Reviews	Facebook Review Score	Twitter Followers	Tweets	Following on Twitter	Instagram Followers	Following on Instagram	Instagram Posts
Mar-15	6325	117	4.7	8838	5896	863	11900	433	983
Jan-16	8394	165	4.5	11200	7637	953	18300	736	1674
Change %	32.7	41.0	-4.3	26.7	29.5	10.4	53.8	70.0	70.3
Change n	2069	48	-0.2	2362	1741	90	6400	303	691

FIGURE 9. Competitor A's key social media figures

3.2.1 Main utilisations of the social media channels:

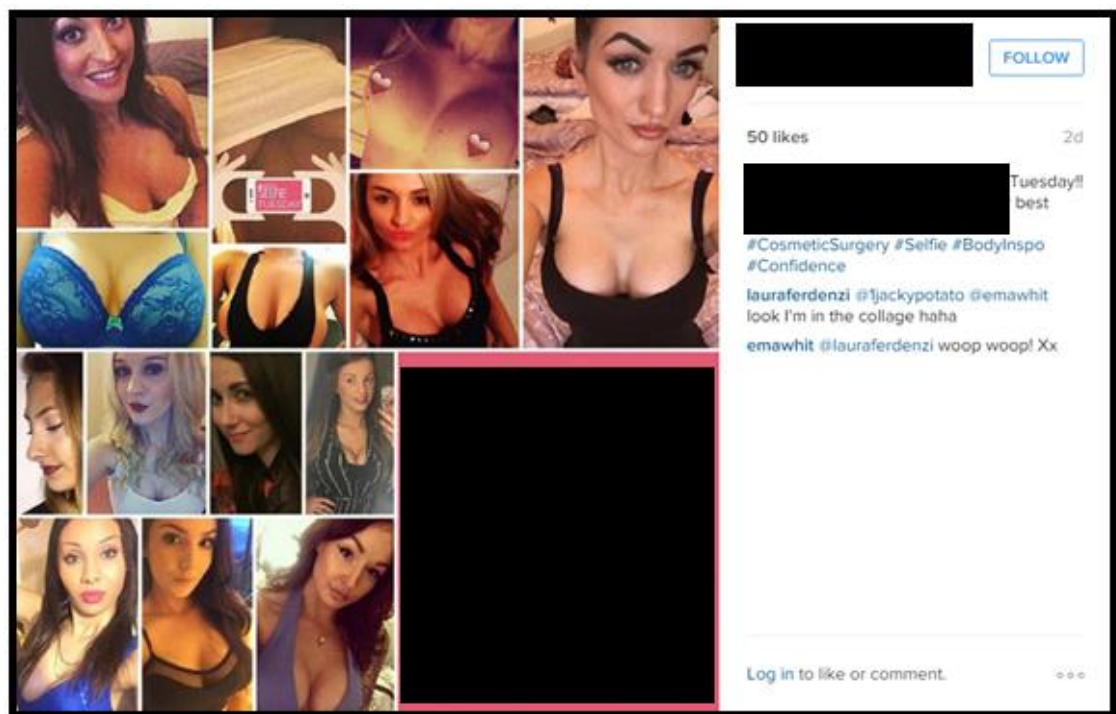
- Promotional
 - o Company branding; girly, 'glamorous customers'
 - o Promoting good reviews by posting them
- Informational
 - o Before & After pictures: Breast Augmentations (heavily focused), Rhinoplasty, Liposuction
 - o Recruitment announcements
 - o Infographics or charts about procedures
- Entertainment
 - o Humour; funny pictures and quotes that appeal to young women
 - o Celebrities
 - o Seasonal greetings and wishes
- Competitions
 - o Like, comment and share -type of competitions
- User Generated Content
 - o Encouraging users to post pictures of themselves, and rewarding with re-posting the pictures and awarding winners on weekly basis
- Communications
 - o Direct messaging regarding questions, bookings, complaints (assumed)

3.2.2 Analysis and examination of content

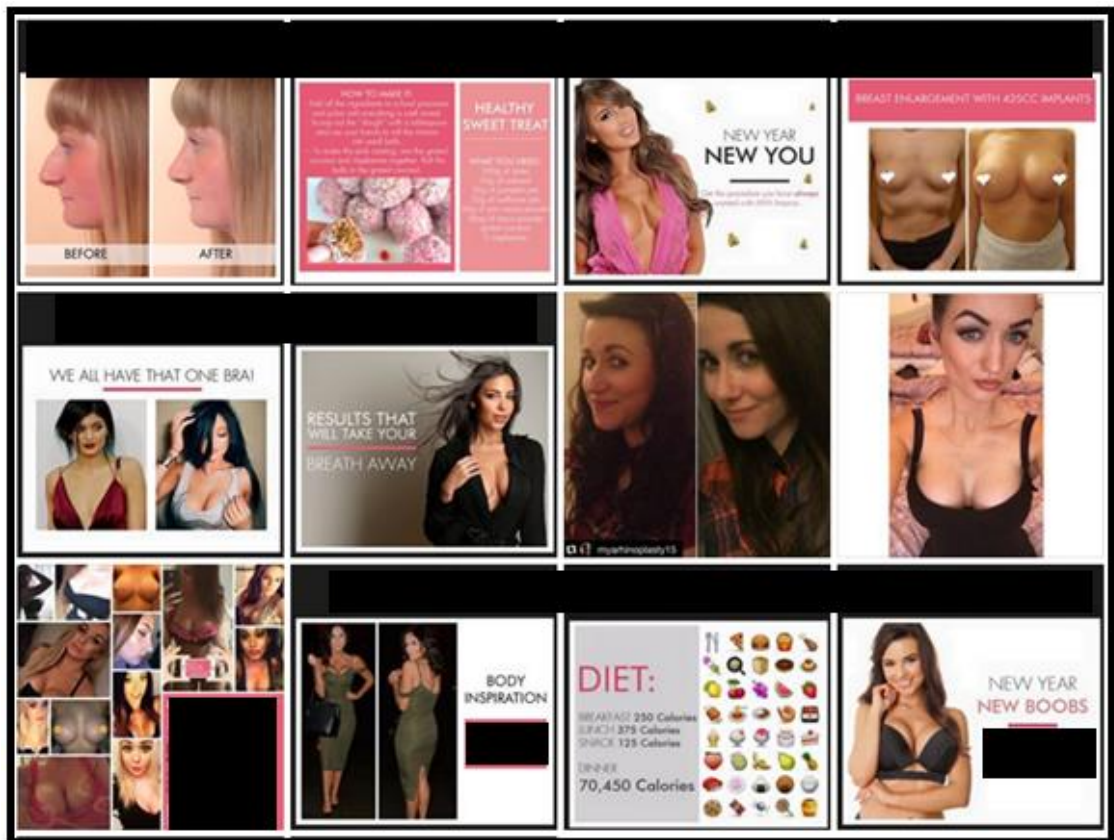
Competitor A recycles their content across all platforms in almost exactly the same form. While this makes their job of managing social media easier, it does not provide any extra value for the users of these different platforms in my opinion, if every platform has exactly the same content.

Competitor A focuses its advertising and targeting heavily on younger women and this can also be seen in their social media presence. Especially their Twitter and Instagram accounts are popular because Competitor A is focused in young women posting pictures of themselves with nearly no clothes on for others to be admired. Competitor A rewards this with attention-seeking behaviour by reposting the pictures on their page again, which most likely is the thing a typical customer of Competitor A wants: To be 'glamorous' and to be admired, and to get attention.

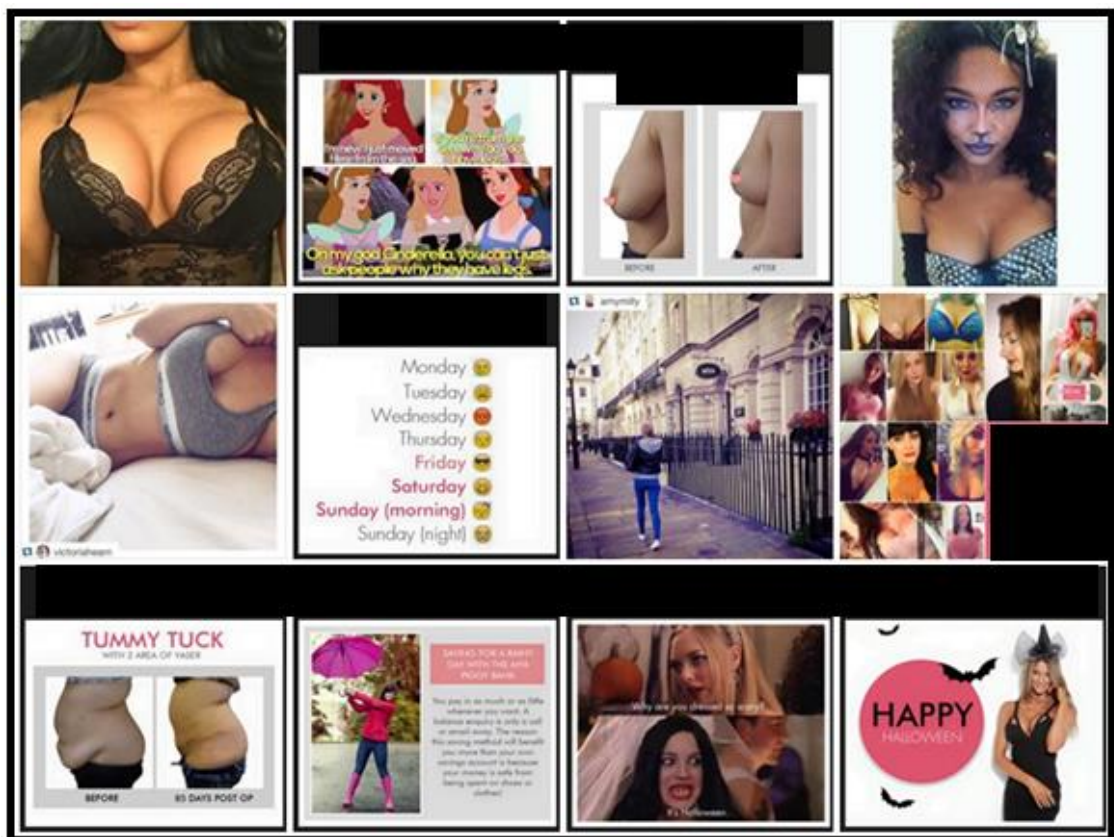
Visually the photos are really similar, and Competitor A uses black and pink colour in virtually every picture in some form with their own graphics in order to strengthen the Competitor A brand visually.



PICTURE 7. A screenshot of Competitor A's Selfie Tuesday post on Instagram



PICTURE 8. An overview of Competitor A's recent Facebook posts 1/2 (2016)



PICTURE 9. An overview of Competitor A's recent Facebook posts 2/2 (2016)

3.2.3 Example A: User generated content

Utilising user generated content creates great opportunities for a social media presence: In my opinion it gives the customers and fans a sense of recognition and status, but also makes the company's job easier, as the content is produced partially or completely by someone else. According to Sophie Turton who is a Content Marketing Specialist at Bozboz: "As marketers, instead of creating content, we should be creating opportunities for content creation - Instagrammable moments, inspiring experiences. And instead of broadcasting, we should create opportunities for conversation - live communities of digitally-savvy warriors, engaging with your brand from various corners of the globe"

Competitor A's user generated content is mainly provocative selfies. Because of the type of the content, the popularity of this kind of attention-seeking content is heavily focused on Instagram. The following picture of the "Competitor A Girl" of the week had 117 likes on Instagram, but on Facebook the same picture had only 15 likes and on Twitter only 8 likes. Provocative pictures gather better engagement and reach on Instagram because it is less personal as a platform as Facebook, for example.

Although awarding these attention-seeking users with more attention seems to be working for Competitor A pretty well in terms of engagement and increasing followers on Instagram and Twitter, the same kind of action cannot be mimicked for Company X without demeaning the values of the company.

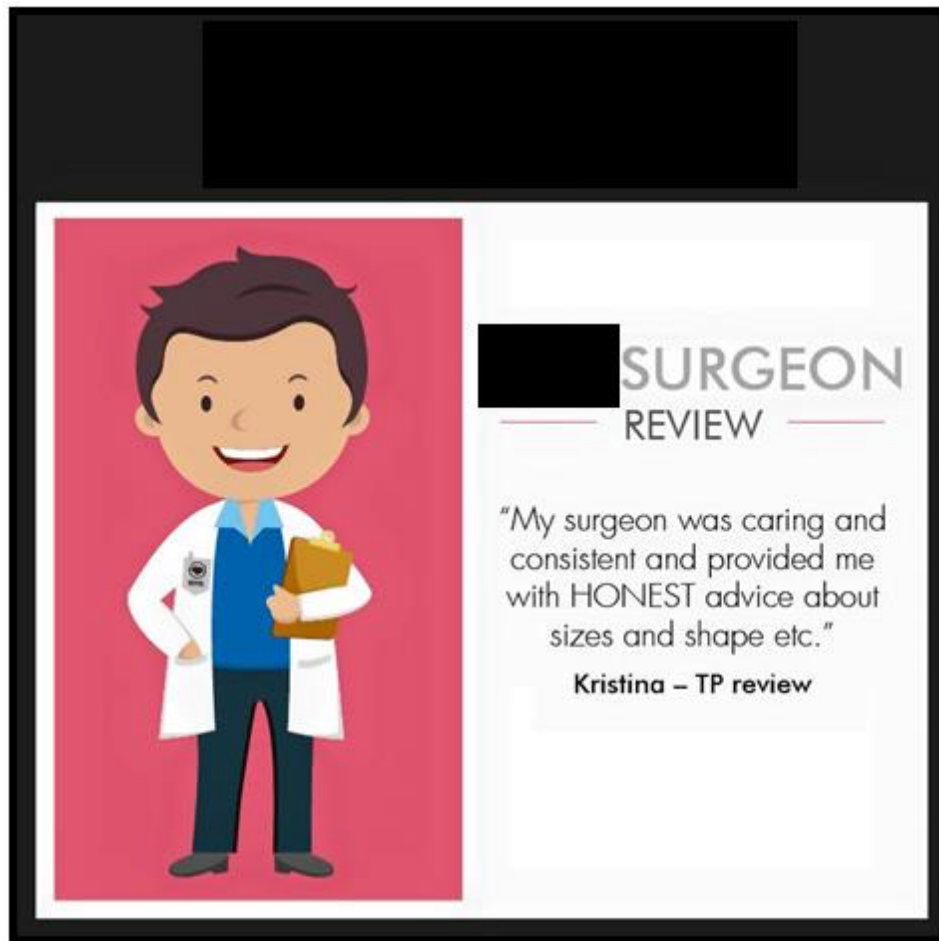


PICTURE 10. A screenshot of Competitor A's Competitor A Girl of the week winner

3.2.4 Example B: Posting Reviews

Competitor A occasionally utilises their social media to highlight good reviews of the company. The original review in this example that got reposted on Competitor A's social media channels was originally posted on Trustpilot. Trustpilot is a less-open platform, and on it Trustpilot and the company that is being reviewed have more control over the reviews than on unedited open platforms. In my opinion using less-open and paid-for platforms like Trustpilot tells that their reviews they have received or their reputation is in need of improvement.

If a Facebook user would like to read the reviews of the company, he or she would go to the reviews section. But the fact that Competitor A feels the need to post good reviews separately, shows that there might be some issues they are trying to address. The review in the example highlights about the surgeon providing honest advice about sizes and shapes. And as this review in the example is only about the half of the original review and they nit-picked this part, we can assume that Competitor A has received negativity regarding providing young girls with breasts that are oversized or disproportionate.



PICTURE 11. A screenshot of a Competitor A Surgeon Review

3.3 Competitor B

	Facebook Likes	Facebook Reviews	Facebook Review Score	Twitter Followers	Tweets	Following on Twitter	Instagram Followers	Following on Instagram	Instagram Posts
Mar-15	15410	N/A	N/A	2168	2593	163	1	0	0
Jan-16	17712	N/A	N/A	2530	3225	176	107	0	0
Change %	14.9	N/A	N/A	16.7	24.4	8.0	10600	N/A	N/A
Change n	2302	N/A	N/A	362	632	13	106	0	0

FIGURE 10. Competitor B's key social media figures

3.3.1 Main utilisations of the social media channels:

- Promotional
 - Promotional posts of different procedures offered by Competitor B
- Informational
 - Beauty tips
 - Fitness and healthy food tips
- Entertainment
 - Humour; making fun of Mondays, cute animal pictures
 - Style and fashion trends
 - Celebrities
 - Motivational quotes and pictures
 - Seasonal greetings and wishes
- Communications
 - Direct messaging regarding questions, bookings, complaints (assumed)

3.3.2 Analysis and examination of content

Competitor B has the biggest following on Facebook out of all of the companies, almost as much as Company X's and Competitor A's Facebook followers combined. This can be explained by examining and comparing their Facebook posts to other companies quite well: There's no repetition in posts or the images used and the posts are heavily focused in their visual appearance.

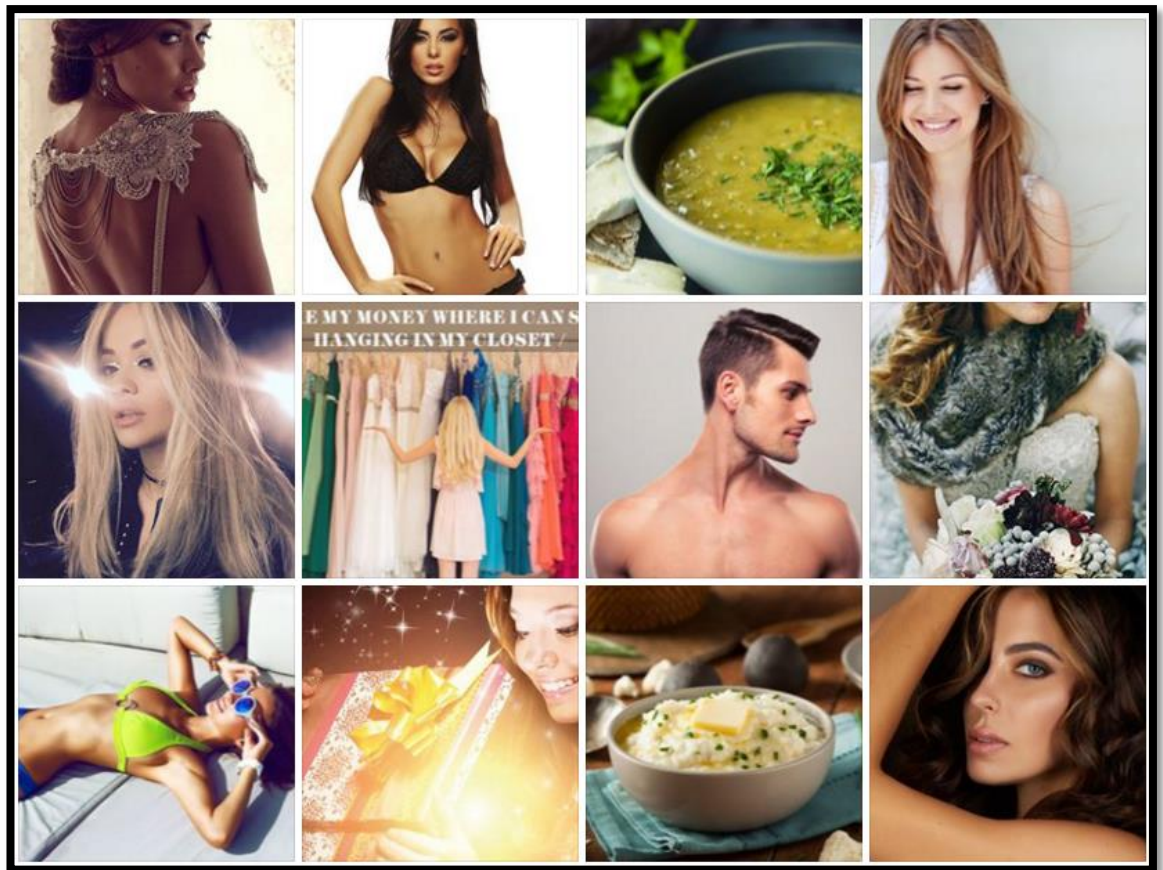
Competitor B also utilises Facebook slightly differently to Twitter, instead of recycling all of the content that they have produced on Facebook they tweet similar and sometimes the same content, but not exactly the same content all the time. The only content that they appear to be consistently recycling across channels, are posts that direct to Competitor B's own website, such as offers and informational content.

They do not use hashtags on their Facebook posts either, mostly due to the fact that the majority of Facebook users do not still utilise hashtags on Facebook (McHugh, 2013), as they do on Twitter and Instagram. Instead, they keep their posts on Facebook rather short and clean, usually between one to two sentences long and all of the posts utilise stylish pictures to make the posts seem to be of a 'higher standard'.

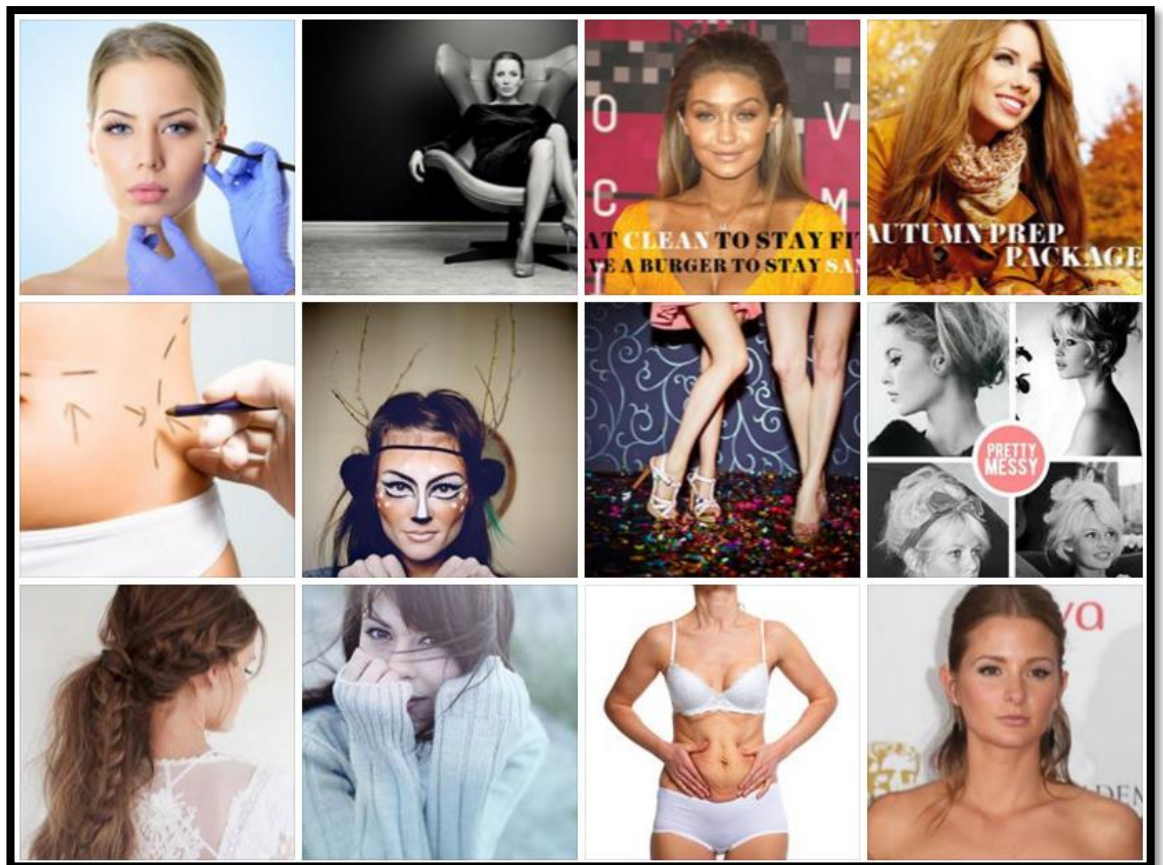
The biggest difference between Competitor B and the other companies is that they do not seem to do competitions, nor take advantage of user generated content or use social media for company branding.

Competitor B's social media posts are highly visual. However the vast majority of the visual content comes from Shutterstock, and in my opinion this poses possible threats in terms of how the content quality is perceived. In Competitor B's case though, they have managed to choose the pictures in such a manner, so most of them seem like that they are not obviously from a stock photo service. Even the pictures that have a humorous quote or a sentence, are premade and bought from Shutterstock.

The pictures do not have any branding in them either, this makes the vast usage of costly stock photos a bit less effective. Introducing the company logo, colours, or other branding in the pictures whilst maintaining style and not appearing to be too cluttered should be easily achievable. However to me it seems like Competitor B's social media team lacks in visual planning and execution - and in basic picture editing skills. Not including any branding in the pictures could also be a conscious choice, although it would be a very odd one in my opinion.



PICTURE 12. An overview of Competitor B's recent Facebook posts 1/2 (2016)



PICTURE 13. An overview of Competitor B's recent Facebook posts 2/2 (2016)

3.3.3 Example A: ‘Deceiving’ for engagements

Since the social media started to gain ground as a viable marketing tool for businesses, marketers came up with ways to ‘deceive’ the users of social media in order to gain more engagements. One of these was and still is to either “fill in the blank ____” type of posts or just asking questions in order to make the users engaged. However, if the question or the possible answers to it do not provide real value for anyone, it is just an attempt to deceive the user to engage the post in my opinion.

When asking questions, the responses and the interest generated by the responses to others in my opinion should be the key factor when drafting such posts. And there are questions that people these days do not want to answer at all. To me the worst being quite possibly: What are your plans for the weekend? There are several reasons why people would not want to answer that publicly. One reason being that possible burglars could get the information that the family is going away for the weekend, or people are not just that interested in what other people are doing during their weekend. If a person wants to get ideas for what to do during the weekend, they will usually result to asking Google that rather than result to a cosmetic surgery company’s Facebook page in my opinion. In the example post Competitor B asks about healthy ‘food swaps’ and if people do them. While the core idea was perhaps good; to get people sharing their healthy food ideas, the topic or the post did not unfortunately for them provide enough value, was not relevant, or was not simply interesting enough – because it lacked in the engagements generated.



PICTURE 14. A screenshot of a typical comment-baiting example

3.4 Competitor C

	Facebook Likes	Facebook Reviews	Facebook Review Score	Twitter Followers	Tweets	Following on Twitter	Instagram Followers	Following on Instagram	Instagram Posts
Mar-15	2001	26	4.4	3564	7999	5144	1038	1171	358
Jan-16	2373	39	3.9	6082	10700	2230	2536	1740	815
Change %	18.6	50.0	-11.4	70.7	33.8	-56.6	144.3	48.6	127.7
Change n	372	13	-0.5	2518	2701	-2914	1498	569	457

FIGURE 11. Competitor C's key social media figures

3.4.1 Main utilisations of the social media channels:

- Promotional
 - o Company branding
 - o Offers and discounts of both services and products
- Informational (Heavily focused)
 - o Before & After pictures
 - o Infographics or charts about not only procedures, but nutrition, cooking and healthy habits and exercising
- Entertainment
 - o Celebrities
 - o Seasonal greetings and wishes
 - o Shocking or otherwise intentionally controversial material; 'critical scaremongering'
 - o Trending topics, world event, fashion
- Communications
 - o Direct messaging regarding questions, bookings, complaints (assumed)

3.4.2 Analysis and examination of content

Competitor C has also a more clinical approach to delivering their image on social media as Company X does, when compared to others. The biggest difference between Competitor C and others is that they openly show the negative side of cosmetic surgery and try to be on the criticising side, making them appear to be more responsible. The majority of their posts consist of informational and before & after photos, with the occasional celebrity post or a fashion tip.

[illegible]

PICTURE 16. An overview of Competitor C's recent Facebook posts 1/2 (2016)

Some of Competitor C's social media tactics are slightly controversial: With Twitter, one can easily gain new followers by just following someone else, and they will follow you back. Competitor C has applied this fact into their social media utilisation. Competitor C's Twitter account was following 5144 different Twitter accounts in March 2015, but in January 2016 they are only following 2230 Twitter accounts. They have clearly taken advantage of the 'follow me, follow you' principle that is an essential part of Twitter, but they decided to unfollow almost three thousand accounts after they had gotten their amount of followers up. Following graph will demonstrate how radical the change in the amount of accounts followed was amongst the four companies that were being compared.

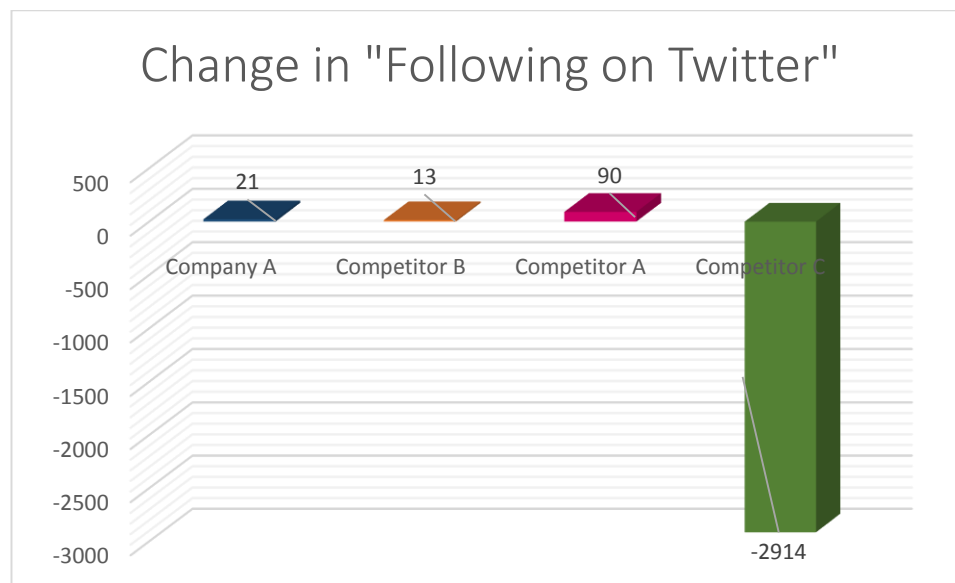


FIGURE 12. Change in the number of accounts Competitor C follows on Twitter

This in my opinion is not an honest or a strategy that it in good taste in any ways, but so far seems to have worked for them. One can only guess if the people that Competitor C has unfollowed will eventually notice that they have been unfollowed. And one can only guess if the people will notice that they are still following Competitor C and whether this will have any negative impact on Competitor C or not. The majority will most likely not notice one company unfollowing them and therefore their dishonest Twitter strategy might have worked for gaining followers, but as it is not clearly of the best of practises; A company that wants to be perceived as a transparent, clinical, trustworthy and responsible like Company X, should not apply any of these deceptive methods in their Twitter usage - at least not to this extent.

3.4.3 Example A: Click-Baiting

Click-baiting is the act of intentionally encouraging people to click on a link without telling them the crucial or any information regarding the contents of the link. According to Facebook (2014) 80% of respondents in their study said that they preferred headlines that helped them decide if they wanted to read the full article before they had to click through.

Competitor C seems to be utilising click-baiting posts on weekly basis. These kinds of posts greatly lower the quality of their Facebook posts and Facebook will penalise their future posts accordingly for creating such material (Facebook, 2014). And as expected, the example post had no engagements at all. In Facebook's Newsfeed FYI -guide they explain a part of Facebook News Feed algorithm; in which if the post has a lot of clicks but no engagements, they interpret it in a way that the content was not interesting. This indeed leads to Facebook showing less of posts by a page that is regularly posting such content.

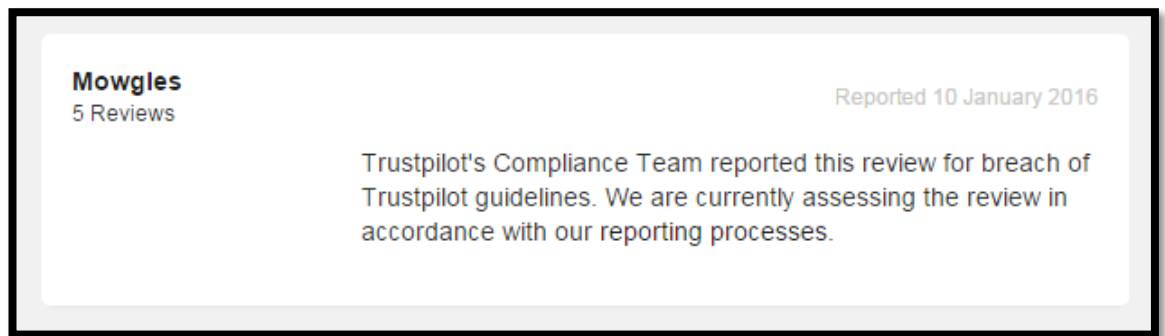


PICTURE 17. A screenshot of an example click-baiting post by Competitor C

3.4.4 Example B: Censorship

Competitor C does not allow anyone to post on their page, instead when one does this, one gets a “Your post will be reviewed by our admin” message – but as there are 0 posts on the page it is safe to assume that no post get on their Facebook page.

Also, Competitor C does not have any Facebook reviews visible. Instead they use the Trustpilot reviews app on Facebook. In my opinion this shows they have had negative comments and reviews to the extent, that in order for them to appear like a desirable company for cosmetic procedures, they have taken censorship as a part of their social media plan. Trustpilot reviews is a somewhat legitimate platform for reviews, but the company can report the negative reports to Trustpilot and then it’s the customer’s responsibility to provide proof of purchase and making it harder for them to post a review (Trustpilot). If a review has been reported, the review will be hidden from the public and instead the following will be seen:



PICTURE 18. A screenshot of a Trustpilot review that has been reported

This ‘current assessing of the review’ can take quite some time, and the review might not end up on the in the end if they decide so. The usage of a review platform that takes money from the companies that are being reviewed and due to the control that the companies and Trustpilot has over the reviews, does not convey an honest view of the company in my opinion.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE FOR COMPANY X

By combining the knowledge from basic marketing principles, expert knowledge on social media, and findings from the research; I can draft some recommendations, guidelines and develop on ideas to help or at least to guide Company X with their usage of social media.

4.1 The Importance of Brand Advocacy

According to Nielsen's 2015 Global Trust in Advertising report, for Europeans the trust in recommendations from people that they knew was as high as 78%. Consumer opinions posted online were trusted by 60% and branded websites only were trusted by 54%, making the opinion of real customers and their influence even so more important. Also according to a report written by Michael Hulme (2012) from the Institute of Advanced Studies at Lancaster University "Your Brand: At Risk or Ready for Growth," the percentage of consumers who don't trust ads in UK is 96. However the study also found that up to 78% of the respondents were positively interested in being involved by the companies in developing products and services.

This means that consumers become more and more wary and sceptic towards advertising, and more and more companies invest heavily on brand advocacy and the different utilisations of it. This is because recommendations from people that the people know and even the opinions that have been posted online, have a higher trust rating amongst consumers above any other kind of marketing. Rob Fugetta the CEO and founder of Zuberance (2012, 50) also found that UK companies with higher customer advocacy levels grew four times faster than those with lower advocacy levels. According to Fugetta (2012, 48): "Advocate marketing isn't about selling to Advocates. It's about selling with advocates. It's about leveraging Advocates as a marketing channel to reach prospects with relevant, trusted messages."

Two examples of how to utilise Brand Advocacy in social media will be explained further in the sixth chapter.

4.2 Engaging the users on Social Media

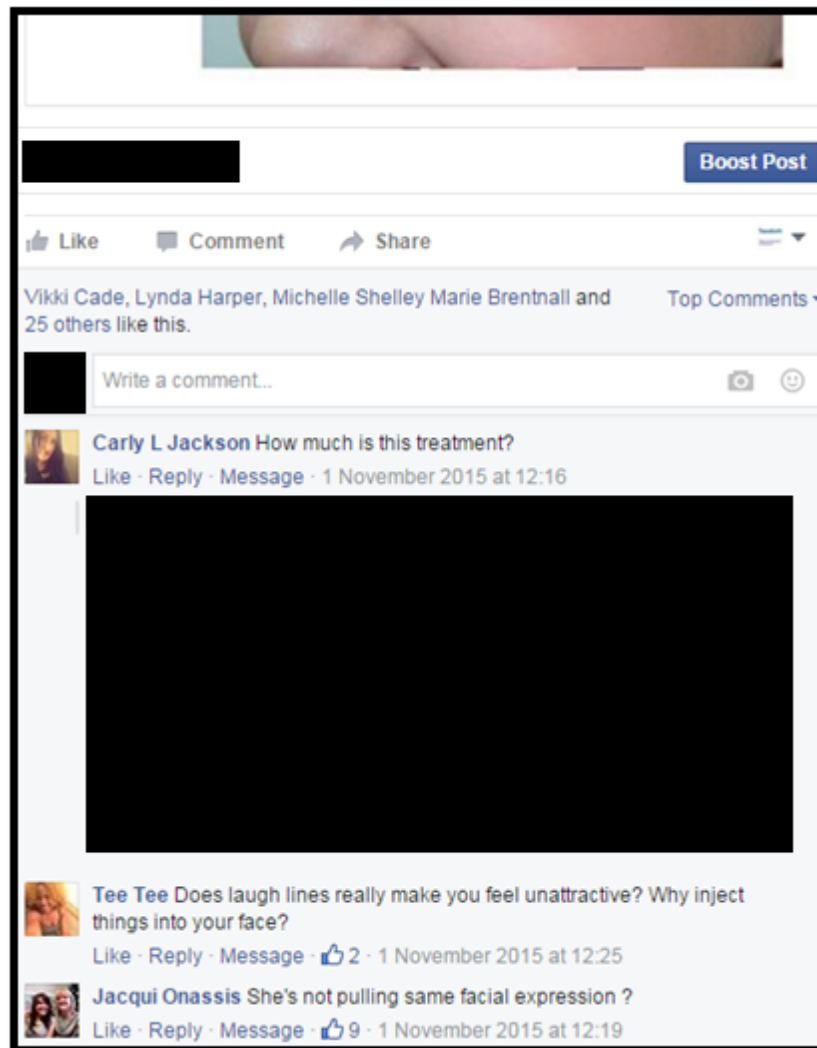
Facebook's and Twitter's direct messaging services do not in practise differ that much from an E-mail. And in my opinion customers expect both of them to work in a pretty similar manner. However, social media creates more opportunities in open and public communication and Company X should utilise this fact to the full extent. Not just when dealing with negative feedback, but what users comment and others comment, Company X should be ready to engage these users. According to Dave Chaffey and Fiona Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 535) in order to take advantage of the benefits of social media it is important to start and participate in customer conversations. The importance of engaging in the conversation and dedicating in it with customers is furthermore highlighted by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 539): "Create and maintain good conversations. Advertisers who engage in discussions are more likely to resonate with the audience, but once the conversations are started they must be followed through." In my opinion engaging the users also gives them the sense of respect and recognition, and when the company engages the customers on social media in a humane way, the whole brand benefits from humanisation the engagement provides (Andrew Pressault, Hootsuite, 2014).

Therefore social media should be used actively, not passively. If a company only creates content, posts it, and moves to planning the next piece of content; the company is missing out on an opportunity. By actively engaging the users on the social media platforms Company X is active on, they can take part in the conversation themselves. It does not matter what kind of a comment or a post it is on social media, every engagement that can be taken and that makes sense to take, in my opinion should be taken.

The following picture is of the comments followed up by a before and after photo of a patient that had gone through Botox treatment. The post received a good amount of likes, a relatively good reach for a post that was not boosted, and a good amount of engagements as well.

The only comment that got a response from Company X, was the only person that was interested in the price of the treatment and therefore the strongest lead generated by the post. In this example post, Company X could have engaged the other users as well. By not engaging these, misinformation and negativity can be seen in the comment sections of the otherwise well performing post – and left unattended. Also in my opinion, by only

responding to comments that are interested in purchasing the product, one might get the picture of Company X that they are only interested in engaging the users if it results in a sale.



PICTURE 19. A screenshot of a conversation in a Facebook post on Botox by Company X

For example, to Jacqui Onassis Company X could have responded:

“Thank you for your comment Jacqui. That is indeed how actually Botox works; one is not able to do the same facial expressions as Botox temporarily paralyses the muscles – resulting in smoother and less wrinkly skin. 😊”

Comments like the one in the example however should be done with great caution, so that one does not seem too arrogant or condescending, as the good intentions could backfire. But in this case engaging Jacqui regarding how Botox works, would have been easily

done by any Company X employee. And as Jacqui's comment's amount of likes shows (9), the amount of people that are not aware of how Botox works is quite significant in comparison to the amount of engagements the actual post received.

4.3 Dealing with negative comments and feedback

In my opinion dealing with negative feedback on social media should be considered as important at least if not more important than dealing with negative feedback in face-to-face situations. If a customer or a legitimate complainant is left dissatisfied, the damage caused by poorly handling these situations on social media easily gets so much worse for the company and the image than a normal face-to-face situation would. According to HootSuite (2014); "Every comment and complaint represents a great opportunity, though - an opportunity to fix the problem, and do it publically. Or, at the very least, show empathy."

Unfortunately the nature of the business and the area Company X operates in, this causes people with strong opinions to share them publicly on social media. This is in addition to the usual disgruntled customer that may not just have simply been satisfied with the services or products received that every company faces to some extent at least. It does not matter if the negative posts or comments have any ground or who has made them, they all should be dealt with according to the company's image and how the company wants to be perceived in my opinion.

Company X has stated that they want people to perceive the company as responsible and transparent, so the actions on social media should be in line with this statement as well. In the past Company X has been hiding and deleting negative posts and comments, which may not always be the best course of action when dealing with a customer that has had a bad experience with the company – or any other customer or a potential customer for that matter. Hiding and deleting posts from the public is a clear attempt to manipulate how the company wants to be perceived as and this hurts the very core idea and the integrity of Company X.

According to the social media experts and authors from various companies and websites such as Ad-Week (2014), Linda Doell on American Express OPEN Forum, Xabier Ormazabal on Salesforce and 'Carole' on Seek Social Media Blog; the majority agree on

a few key points to successfully dealing with negative feedback and comments. By combining what the majority agrees on and what my personal recommendations are for a company in the cosmetic surgery industry, we can pinpoint the following areas of how to react to negative comments and feedback on social media:

Speed

A slow response can damage the reputation of the company. The amount of damage done can be greatly decreased by a swift response. A speedy response also shows that the company does actually care about its reputation and how their customers feel about them.

Be genuine

Do not use automated responses. Address each case personally. Customers, even the disgruntled ones will appreciate a personal and a humane response more than an automated one.

Acknowledging the problem and being transparent about it

Be honest. If a mistake has been made, it is the company's responsibility to be genuinely sorry about it and to be ready to rectify the situation. And mistakes do happen to everyone and people will understand this, and they will understand it a lot better if the company acknowledges their wrongdoing and rectifies it. Hiding a negative comment or deleting it will not resolve the fact that someone has been dissatisfied. However, blatantly racist and offensive material should be removed, and the user in question notified about the 'House Rules'.

Go offline

Some problems are not best resolved publicly, so it might be in the best of interest of such a problem to take the conversation offline and provide phone details or other means of communications for the person.

Offer a solution

In addition to being sorry, a solution of sorts should be offered for the disgruntled social media user. Sometimes saying sorry can be enough, but if it is not enough other incentives such as refunds or discounts could be utilised.

Remember it is social

Engaging the negativity gives the opportunity to show that the company cares about its customers. One has to keep a level head and respond in a professional, calm, sincere, and not provoking manner. Think about what other customers will think about the negative comment, and what they will think about the response by the company? There are opportunities to show that the company is a transparent and sincerely caring company, or there are threats to show that the company disregards their abused and disgruntled customers by a hot-headed social media manager.

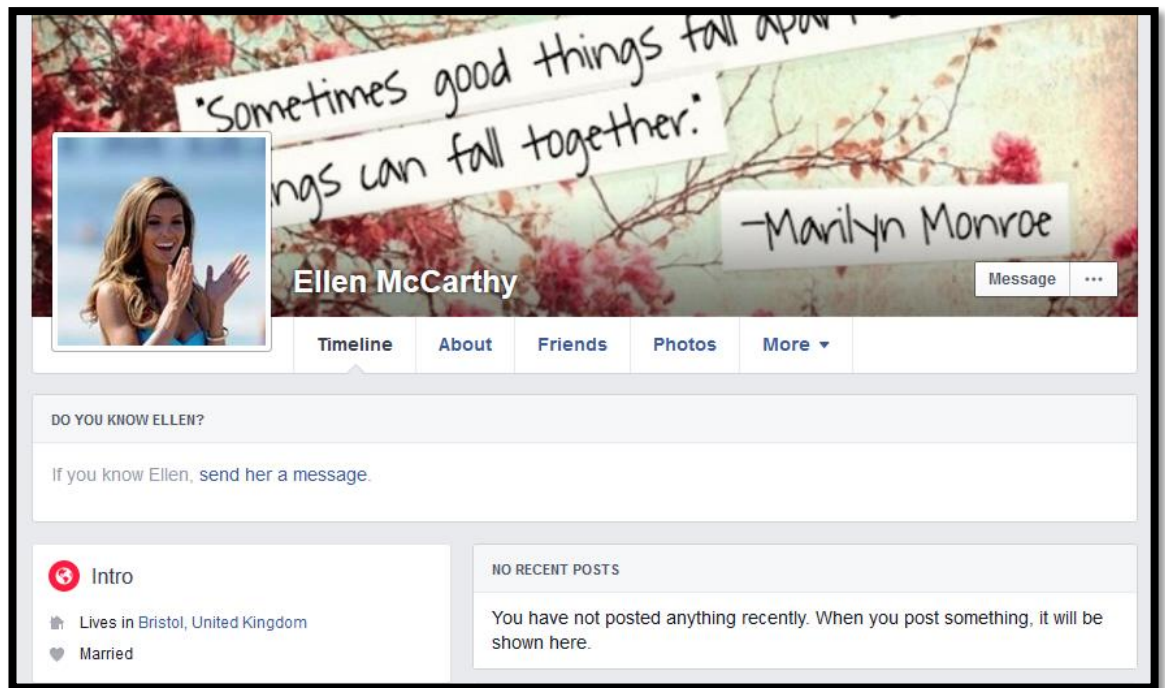
Get notified

In addition to Google Alerts Company X could possibly use other services such as Hootsuite and Mention to know if there are conversations happening either on social media or other platforms, in which it would be Company X's best interest to take a proactive approach to these matters and try to solve and participate in the conversation.

4.3.1 Negative Commenting Case: 'Ellen McCarthy'

Because of the fact that every cosmetic surgery company receives negative comments to some point, and some of the companies appear to have more than others it is hard to actually know how a company does actually respond to and take care of negative commenters.

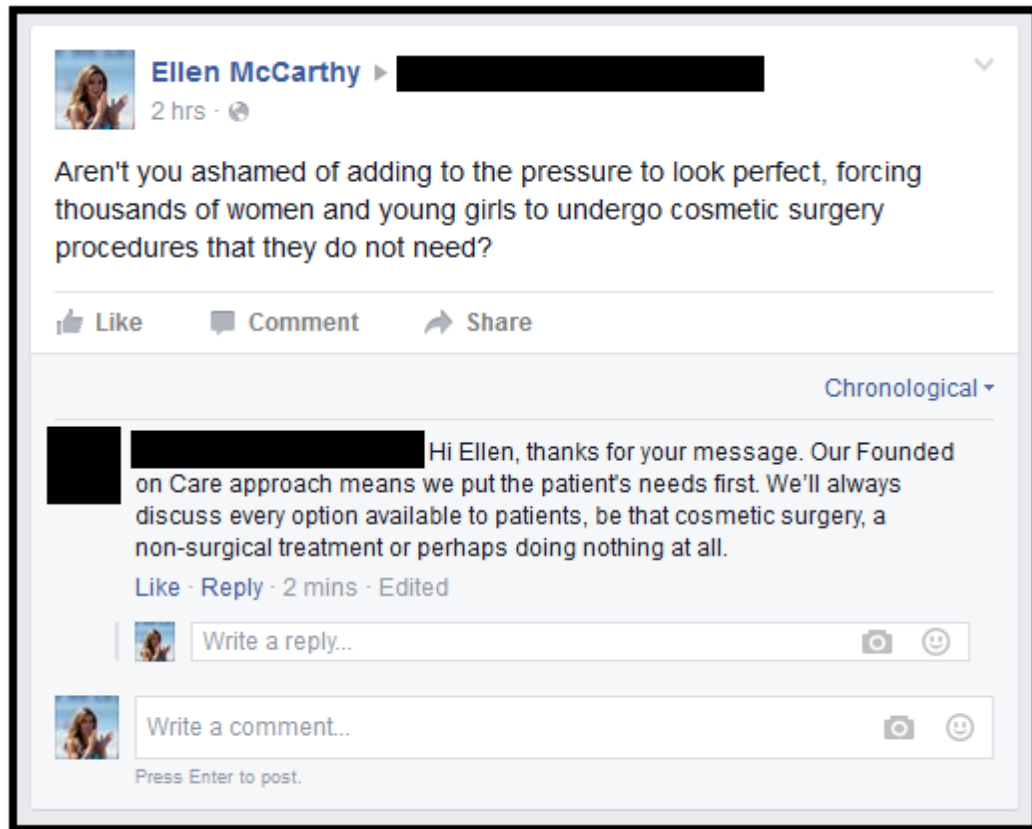
In order to see better how Company X, Competitor A, Competitor B and Competitor C respond to negative comments. A 'heckler alias' called Ellen McCarthy was created to post the same negative comment on every company's Facebook page:



PICTURE 20. A screenshot of Ellen McCarthy's Facebook profile

The negative toned post was posted on a Thursday afternoon at 2.15 PM. That should have meant that all of the companies' staff or whoever might be in charge of the social media presence at the moment should have returned from a possible lunch break and been present to respond as quickly as possible. The post used was negative generally to the whole cosmetic surgery industry, but still not too strong-worded so that the cosmetic surgery companies had no real reason of removing or not allowing the post to be seen: "Aren't you ashamed of adding to the pressure to look perfect, forcing thousands of women and young girls to undergo cosmetic surgery procedures that they do not need?"

Competitor B was the first to respond after 2 hours and 27 minutes:



PICTURE 21. A screenshot of Competitor B's response to Ellen McCarthy

This response is a good example of how to try to face the negative comments head-on: Calmly and respectfully thank for the message, and try to clarify the situation, the facts or how the company actually operates without insulting the person who gave the feedback.

Even if Ellen would be strongly against cosmetic surgery, as she had vented out her anger to several companies on social media, she should be still taken seriously even if not considered as the prime potential customer. Especially if only one company acknowledges her and responds to her, that company has already the advantage over the other competitors. She may never want a surgical procedure for herself, but what if her opinion of the companies is asked or if she wants to get herself a less invasive procedure? If she would want to have a facial peel done for example, and there was only one company that took her seriously and treated her with respect; there is a pretty good chance that she will select that company for the procedure in my opinion.

The post got completely ignored by Company X, Competitor C and Competitor A Cosmetic Surgery for about a week. Ignoring the post not only shows that the companies who did not respond lack planning in dealing with negative feedback, but in the worst case their plan is to ignore the negative comments or posts instead of facing them. All the companies that ignored the feedback left the post on their page for some time. This means that when the potential customers try to find out more about the given companies and browse their Facebook for posts and reviews, they will then stumble upon such negligence and that will in my opinion impact their decision making and their views of such companies.

Both Competitor A and Company X deleted the post from their page without an answer after a week's time. This action seemed to be a premeditated or planned act of sorts, from both Competitor A and Company X: To wait for a certain amount of time to pass, and hope that the person who has made the post has forgotten about it, and would not notice that the post has indeed been deleted.

If we assume that Ellen was a genuinely concerned person regarding what the industry is doing, she would expect some kind of a response from the companies. If ignored completely or if the post would be removed, that could in my opinion infuriate Ellen even more - and that would not accomplish anything positive. Even if one was to remove the post completely, Ellen could do another post again or somewhere else on Facebook publicly, or on a completely different platform. A platform, like a forum such as soFeminine to continue publicly making negative comments, and at this point the company would have no, or very little control of the content or the way the conversation would go. And in this example the conversation would not only be out of control, it would be quite likely to gain more coverage, because it is safe to assume that soFeminine forum has more traffic and participants in discussion than a Facebook's visitor post might have. As the recommendation regarding negative comments and feedback goes, it is best to confront Ellen publicly if possible to address her concerns and still have the control of the discussion.

4.4 Advertising and Promotions

As the pressure in social media is to provide the users with interesting and high quality content, the usability for advertising in the old fashioned sense is somewhat limited for a well performing social media profile in my opinion. Even if someone has followed and

liked a company on their social media accounts, they still might not want to be bombarded with offers and promotions on social media. Therefore for Company X the traditional style of advertising could possibly happen on other media, such as through e-mails to the people who have subscribed and are willing to receive offers and promotional content. Or at least the amount of such marketing actions on social media should be strictly limited in my opinion.

4.5 Gathering Information and Generating Leads

Company X could also utilise their social media presences by gathering more data of their social media followers and other users. For example data gathering could happen when users take part in a competition: Instead of utilising the typical type of a competition where the participants are only required to like and share something, Company X could plan the participation in competitions a bit further: In addition to liking the page and sharing the competition, Company X could ask the participants to fill in some details of themselves. This could take place on a different platform such as a separate page or a Facebook app, and participants should also be given the opportunity to answer the Ultimate Question: “How likely would you recommend Company X?” in order for Company X to identify the brand advocates and to gather information of the participants.

However, creating competitions that require additional effort from the participant’s side will affect the willingness to participate in the competition in my opinion. Therefore the data gathering should be kept as simple and brief as possible, and the actual price of the competition should be valued accordingly. For a simple “like and share” -competition something miniscule as a price could be acceptable, but as the gathered data provides Company X with valuable information of the followers on social media, the value of the price should be matched. Not only because Company X is gaining actual information that has value, but because the participants or possible participants should feel like the trade-off is worth it, for sacrificing a bit of their time for a chance to win the more valuable price.

These competitions and questions asked from participants could also provide a platform for the customers to opt-in for newsletters, offers, or even other incentives like tutorials and tips and exclusive information and promotions as a refund for taking the time in providing Company X with information.

5 CONTENT PLANNING

With the increasing amount of competition the best way to differentiate from other social media pages is to provide the users with high quality content (Facebook, 2014). Especially with the introduction of the new (and ever changing) Facebook algorithm, the focus is on quality, not quantity. Thanks to this algorithm only about 16 percent of the people who have liked a company's page see their posts, even if a brand that posts five out of seven days (comScore, 2011). And 88 percent of fans never return to a brand's Facebook page after clicking the "like" button (comScore, 2011).

By analysing the findings of the social media analysis of Company X and its competition, a few areas of possible issues can be identified, and these areas should be taken in consideration by the person or the team who is creating the content and posting the content. I have pinpointed six areas of possible issues in content planning from the issues that arose from examining the social media presence of Company X, Competitor A, Competitor B and Competitor C:

Value: What value does the content have for the user? Is it informational or entertaining? What differentiates this content from other competition? If you were the end user, would you want to see this content? Why would you? What makes the content stand out? Is this content trustworthy from the viewer's point of view?

Purpose: What purpose does this content serve? What is the desired or expected outcome or reaction in a user? What purpose does the content serve for the company? Why is it posted?

Clarity: Is the content clear? Could it cause confusion or be misinterpreted? Is the wording of the content ideal? Could it be improved? Is everything in the content relevant? Or does it have unnecessary clutter that could be adjusted or completely removed? Could the content offend someone?

Company: Is the content in line with the company's ideology and other marketing? Is there a disconnect between the content and the company? Is the branding of the company well executed? Does it have too much of branding, or too little? Is it executable in a visually appealing manner?

Timing: When will the content be scheduled for releasing? Is it the most optimal time? When are the relevant social media users online or willing to see such content? How often are we posting? How often would the end users really want to see content from Company X?

Engagement: Why would the content create engagement? Or get likes? Would a user share it to their friends; why would they?

6 DEFINING THE USE OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

In my opinion clear roles of different social media channels should be defined in order to efficiently utilise them. It can be tempting to use same material and use it on every social channel, but this results in repetition over the different channels and the effectiveness, the quality and the appeal of the given channels will be lowered (Hootsuite, Facebook). As Company X has the resources and the marketing personnel to focus more on the utilisation of the different channels; recommendations will be made for each main channels on how they could potentially be utilised.

6.1 Facebook

As Facebook is currently the largest social media for platform for Company X, and as it is the largest platform for social media users in United Kingdom, the main focus should be in it as well. Company X should focus especially on Facebook on high quality content, even if it means less frequent posting. And in fact, it should mean less frequent posting. The key issue to be identified for most companies with a Facebook presence, or any other social media presence for that matter, is to think about the end user. Do they really want to see your daily posts about something that is not perhaps really interesting to most, if any? And now that posting unwanted material hurts the visibility of your other posts, is it worth hurting the reach of the better and more valuable posts by posting something that could be considered as less interesting or of less value?

Company X should experiment on posting less frequently as well, in order to see the possible changes in the reach and the amount of engagements their Facebook posts receive. This is because Facebook penalises for posting too frequently by showing less of the content, so some of the efforts might be completely lost if the post will not be seen by the amount of people as the posts would be seen, if the posting was less frequent.

The time for deceiving the users of Facebook into liking and sharing and engaging posts that have no other real purpose is over in my opinion. If a company wants to keep a trustworthy, entertaining, and a social media presence that is of the highest standards: The main focus should be on quality and the purpose of the content.

6.1.1 Utilisation Example: Brand advocate driven community

One possibility for Company X's Facebook utilisation would be to create another Facebook page that will be managed and ran by willing brand advocates: A community page that has only user generated content. This content could consists of the brand advocates' own personal daily updates or stories, or they could use it as a platform to share their experiences or beauty and lifestyle tips and tutorials. The advocates administrating the page could also have a section or to answer to questions regarding their experiences or the procedures they have had. This community could be also included in developing the products and services for Company X and given the exclusive opportunity to be included within the development process of such products and services as a reward.

Company X would have to oversee this community page and act accordingly if something goes wrong or if abuse occurs, but it is not quite likely if the verified brand advocates are given the responsibility, as recognition and trust is the best thing a company can give to its brand advocates, not incentives. According to Fuggetta (2012, 50): "The only reward these genuine Advocates want is the validation of knowing that they've helped a peer. In short, advocacy is own reward."

Company X's main Facebook page could promote this community group as a chance to get a more credible, unedited, and a more realistic and personal glimpse of the company, the services and the products it offers, and most importantly its patients.

Anonymous Advocacy

In my opinion not every happy customer is willing to share their good experiences and opinions of a well performing company that they have had cosmetic procedures done with. This because not everyone wants others to know that they have had something done. Therefore different levels of privacy for brand advocates on Facebook could be implemented to encourage the patients that might be concerned about others knowing of what they have had done with Company X.

Public Advocacy

The brand advocates who do not mind publicly representing Company X and telling about their experiences could use their own Facebook account and name to do the posts on the page.

Partially Private Advocacy

For the brand advocates that are slightly concerned about their privacy, could be given the option of posting as the Facebook Community page, and be advised to use their first name or an alias when posting as the Company X Community Page. This way only the other brand advocates could possibly see the identity of the advocate in question, but they would still maintain their anonymity to the public.

Private Advocacy

If there are brand advocates who would like to tell their stories or posts without absolutely no one getting to know their identity, they could send a Company X employee who is overseeing the usage of the Community Page their posts. And then the employee in question would post the content on behalf of the person.

6.2 Twitter

Twitter as a platform provides the possible utilisation for same high quality content as Facebook does, but with the restriction in character length. In my opinion, some the material produced for Facebook could be recycled for Twitter, given that the quality of the content is engaging and interesting enough for Twitter users to re-tweet the content because they want to, or because there is real value for the users.

The main difference in Twitter utilisation for Company X, when compared to Facebook is the option to publicly engage users and re-tweet content that is relevant to Company X. This means that Twitter is and should be considered as a fast-paced public relations and customer engagement tool. In other words there are no real changes that need to be done in Company X's Twitter presence, as Company X already re-tweets the related tweets and recycles posts from Facebook.

Company X however might want to consider actively following more Twitter accounts of companies, products and users that are of relevance to Company X's own customers and followers. Obviously this should not be done to the same extent as Competitor C has done, because over-following others only for the sake of it sends the message of desperation for followers and attention in my opinion. But as long as Company X is following well-selected and relevant accounts it does not, it only helps to boost the amount of relevant coverage and relevant followers.

6.3 Pinterest

By examining the usage of Pinterest, one can notice that most of the companies do not have an active Pinterest account, nor do the ones that have utilise the full potential of Pinterest. Most companies that actually do have a Pinterest account, recycle the material posted on other social media channels such as Facebook.

Pinterest is still a fairly new platform, though the growth in users has been quite radical: According to Pinterest in United Kingdom there were over two million users in 2013 (up from 200 000 users in 2011) and the user base has grown since. Unfortunately Pinterest has not been releasing statistics lately, so the recent developments in the user base have to be based on an educated guess. However, some of the older statistics might prove useful in terms of cosmetic surgery. According to Visually (2011), 29% of Pinterest users in United Kingdom belonged to the highest earning demographic.

Pinterest users have the tendency be mostly female, although in United Kingdom there were actually more male users than female users in 2011. This statistic however is old and as the amount of users has increased greatly, the ratio between female and male users may have shifted greatly as well.

Pinterest has a few distinguished differences to other social media platforms that could provide useful for Company X:

6.3.1 Utilisation Example: Information graphics or 'infographics'

Pinterest could provide a good platform for providing customers information regarding different procedures that Company X has for offer, or even infographics on nutrition, and health, and everything that is in the line with feeling and looking good.

6.3.2 Utilisation Example: Brand advocate administrated Pinterest board(s)

As one can give rights to other Pinterest users to post pins on a Pinterest board, Company X could provide the Pinterest users that have answered 10 to the Ultimate Question or the otherwise known brand advocates with access to administrate a part of Company X's Pinterest board.

The user-generated content could contain not only the typical fashion and lifestyle tutorials and tips, but also perhaps more personal content. Content, such as pins where the brand advocates get the possibility to give potential customers valuable insights on personal experiences of cosmetic surgery or their daily life.

6.3.3 Utilisation Example: DIY-tutorials and tips

One very different feature of Pinterest is that the users go on Pinterest especially to look for DIY-ideas (Pinterest) such as: Clothing, makeup tutorials and cooking. This could be utilised in the sense that Company X could repost every lifestyle, beauty and health related tutorial or tip on Pinterest. Pinterest Boards should be created accordingly for each subgroup of tutorials or advices for easier navigation.

Before a decision on greater commitment towards the usability of this social media channel can be made, a more recent statistics of the user demographics has to be available, until then no excessive commitment can be justified in my opinion. However, a Pinterest presence still could be created and maintained especially if some of the administrative work could be outsourced to brand advocates.

6.4 Instagram

According to the latest statistics Instagram has 14 million monthly active users (Instagram, 2015), compared to Facebook's 35 million active monthly users making it a very noticeable social platform. There is a distinguished difference between the usage of Instagram and Facebook though in my opinion: Instagram as a social media platform is more suitable for pictures and posts that clearly seek attention from unknown users, and usually these attention seeking users are posting pictures that either blatantly show-off

their possessions, status or their looks. Competitor A's Instagram success comes from this fact, that the majority of their customers are young girls who want attention.

Unfortunately for Company X, the Instagram's full potential is not applicable in the sense Competitor A is utilising, because it would not suit the company and as a marketing action there would be a complete disconnect in everything else they are doing. And even if the typical Instagram user is not the Competitor A's attention-seeking kind, but uses Instagram mostly to share photos of their personal daily life to their friends and family – the utilisation for a cosmetic surgery company that wants to remain as the responsible option is not ideal.

Company X can however recycle the high quality content on Instagram that has been made for other platforms. The actual usages for Instagram could include using the platform for partaking in visual competitions, sharing beauty tips and tutorials, recipes, and other 'feel good' -user generated content that is not 'too vain'. But as the largest user demographic for Instagram users is 18 to 24 year olds, the marketing usability and the amount of focus that should be used for this platform maybe is not worth an excessive and a separate effort in my opinion; as most of the potential customers and users are still reachable through using Facebook and other channels properly.

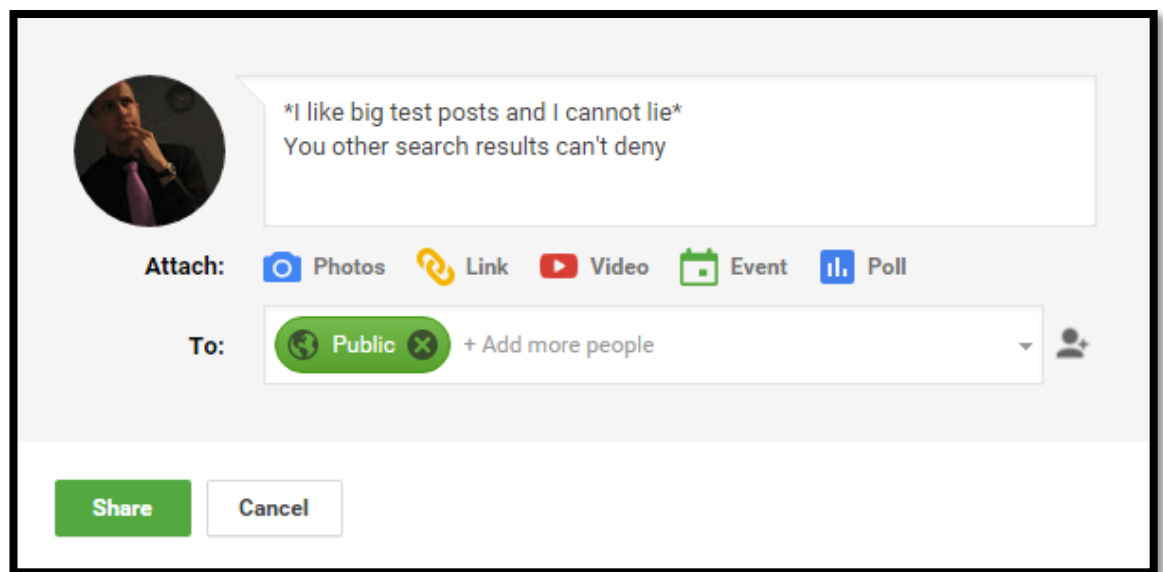
6.5 Google+

According to several sources, such as Joshua Barrie from Business Insider (2015), Google+ has been struggling since the launch. And for a cosmetic surgery company a Google+ presence provides very little in terms of social media usability. However, according to Google's statistics and general research, having a Google+ affects a company's rankings in Google search results. In United Kingdom Google+ had 12.6 Million users, of which only 3.9 Million were active. And as the majority of Google+ users are men (Anthony McLoughlin, 2014), it makes Google+ not the most ideal medium to reach the biggest female target groups for cosmetic surgery. Most of the active Google+ users are not really active on Google+ either (Barrie 2015); The 'activity' can be something as little as changing their profile picture or commenting on a YouTube video, making Google+ even less attractive as a real medium for anything other than search engine optimisation.

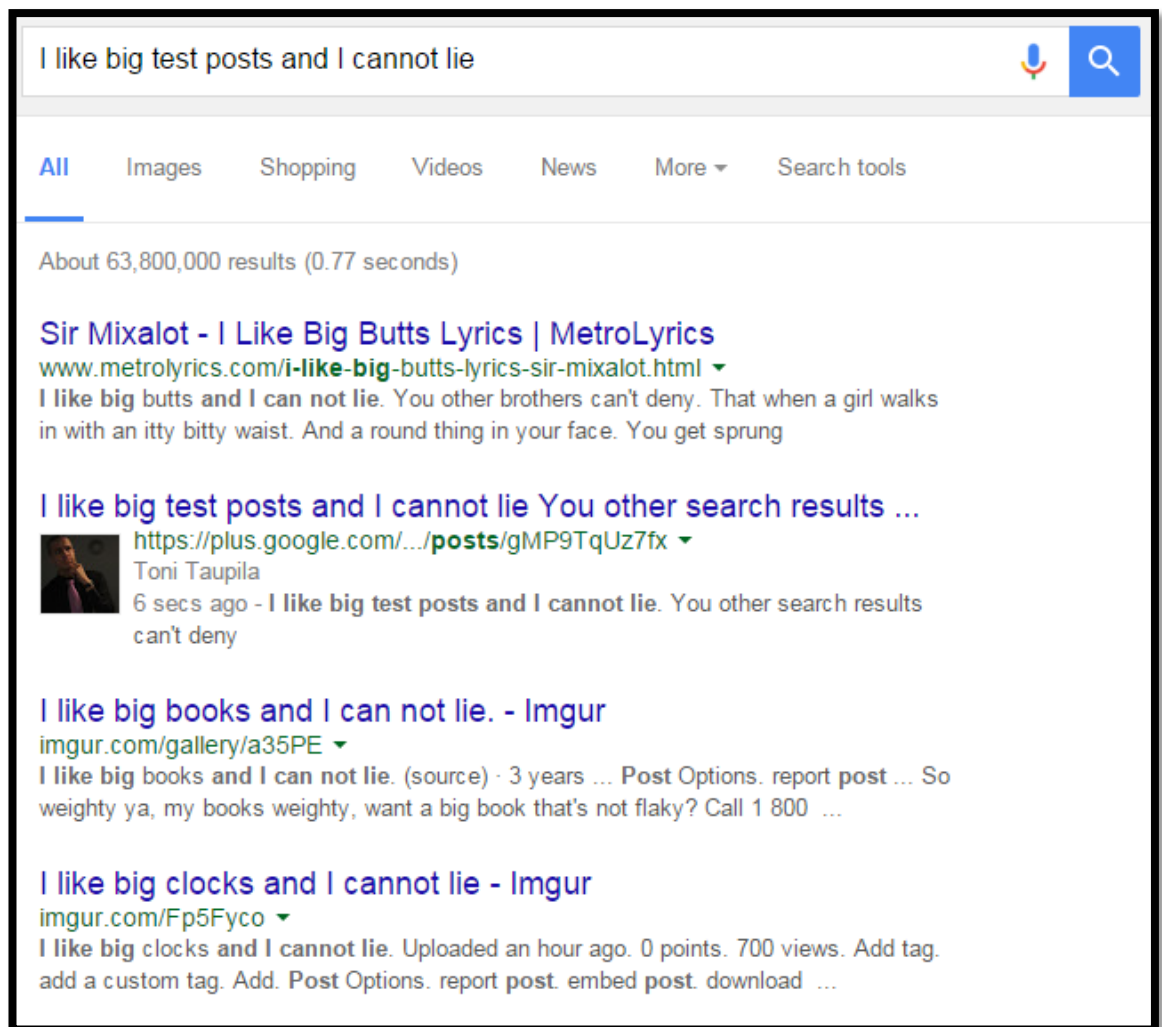
My recommendation for Company X is, that there should be no real focus on Google+, other than recycling the posts from other channels such as Facebook. Company X should however make sure that at least every informational or promotional post regarding male treatments like hair-transplants should be posted on Google+ as well due to the fact that the majority of the users are men. (Anthony McLoughlin, 2014)

Company X can use Google+ to recycle their Facebook posts, but they should post the Google+ content with headlines by using the asterisk sign. According to Cyrus Shepard's Google+ tips headlines are an easy way to transform any post into a more effective post that will generate better Google search results and traffic to the desired link. Using headlines may not guarantee that the Google+ posts will be visible for everyone on the first page of their Google search, but one can easily modify the post to stand out from the rest of the search results.

The following pictures are an example of how to use the asterisk sign and in practise one can see that as everything within Google is well integrated, the search results update within second as well.



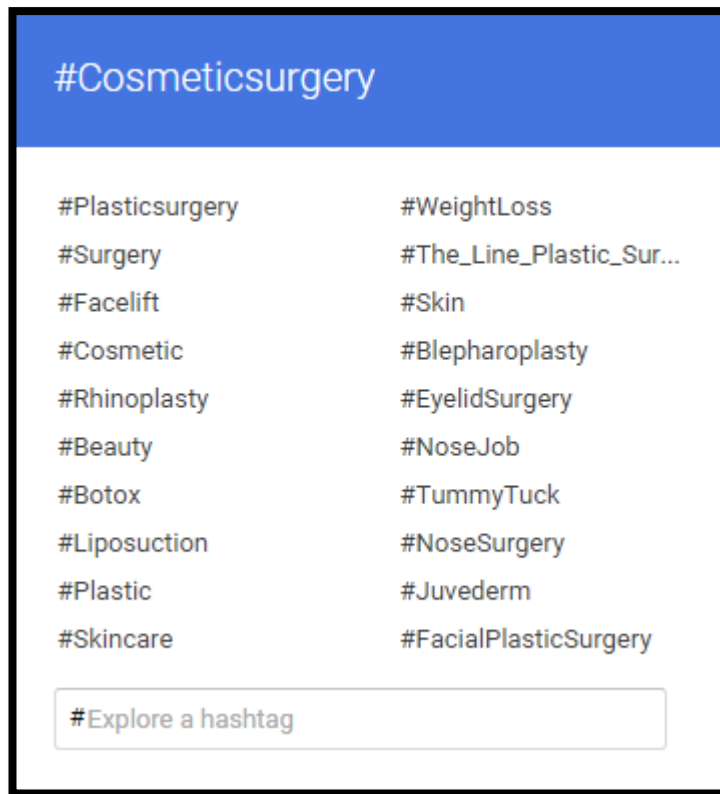
PICTURE 22. A screenshot of an example Google+ post



PICTURE 23. A screenshot of the example posts search results

In this example the search result jumped straight onto the first page of Google Search in a matter of seconds. As the search is more and more personalised with the data Google collects, posts from the companies you or your friends like, have searched for and are interested in will be more likely shown like the example post (Shepard, 2014).

One thing to be taken in consideration with Google+ and its plentiful features, is the way the platform utilises hashtags differently: Instead of having to clutter all posts with 20 hashtags related to the post, one can gain the same relevance with just one hashtag due to the fact that Google+ uses semantic analysis to form relationships between different hashtags (Shepard, 2014). For example, if Company X has been posting about #Botox and someone is searching for #Facelift on Google+, this means they would quite likely stumble upon Company X's post about #Botox due to the relationship of the two hashtags.



PICTURE 24. Google+'s utilisation of relationships between different hashtags

This means that just one good hashtag that is related to the post is sufficient and will also keep the post looking tidy and not cluttered (Shepard, 2014). With the possible addition of Company X's own unique hashtag, so that the different tags that they use will form a relationship with the company, giving the company's posts more visibility with a very little effort.

6.6 Periscope

Periscope is a rather new app that has still gained popularity amongst some companies that want to give a more personal peek behind the scenes to their company. According to Sara Angeles from Business News Daily, Periscope gives businesses an easy, fast and affordable way to communicate with customers in real-time. And because it is platform with a live video feed that enables users to engage the company easily an in real-time, it could be utilised in a number of different manners. Using Periscope would increase the transparency of Company X and if used correctly, relieve some of the misconceptions or doubts about the company and the procedures.

Periscope users can discover live feeds around the world by using the app, but in order to secure a reasonable amount of viewers when the chosen event would take place, Company X would have to promote the event in advance so that people know when to use the app.

However, before investing any effort into any action on Periscope, in my opinion Company X should either gather the information through polling or otherwise, if there is enough of a user base for the utilisation of the app, and how frequent should these live feeds be.

But even if there does not appear to be a great amount of users using Periscope currently; Company X could still test the usability and popularity of the app by testing a smaller Periscope live event of sorts, which gets promoted and possibly the users that were not familiar with Periscope would install the app for the given event. While this initial test event would not require an immense dedication from Company X, it should still be interesting enough for the current and the potential app users to spark their interest.

6.6.1 Utilisation Example: Demonstrations

Periscope could be used to give a realistic idea of what performing a certain procedure looks like and what it consists of. Or to demonstrate how a beauty product is used and how it works. This could provide the potential customers and people who are interested in knowing more about such procedures with credible visual information and that cannot be matched in same way by producing videos or other information that has been planned and edited.

6.6.2 Utilisation Example: Live Q&A

The app could also be used for a live session where an expert possibly accompanied by a patient or several patients of Company X answers questions regarding the chosen topic for the Q&A.

6.6.3 Utilisation Example: Announcements and events

Company X could let the app users to join in live in the events they host, be it a blogger event or an announcement or a celebration of sorts.

7 CONCLUSION

As the impact on consumers through social media channels is increasing, the commitment to a well maintained and planned social media presence should be increased as well in my opinion. While social media for Company X may not be the most important medium for things such as; promoting the company, branding and brand enhancement or communications – it can provide means to do these things really well and efficiently. Even on their own, or as a complementing part of marketing to other marketing efforts when executed with proper effort and planning.

By doing the assessment of Company X and the competitor's usage of social media some specific areas where improvements could be made, and some in which the different companies were performing well, were identified as well. It should be noted that Company X's current presence in social media is sufficient, but it could be greatly improved upon with further dedication and planning. In my opinion some of Company X's social media actions seem to be somewhat in disconnect with the company or their potential customers, and some of the actions seem to lack clear purpose, bringing down the overall appeal and quality of the social media presence as a whole.

My recommendation is that Company X should decide upon a clear social media marketing mix and dedicate to it: In which platforms to operate in, and how to differentiate the platforms; So that they provide additional value to the end user, instead of every platform being a 'wasteland of recycled material'. This marketing mix should focus heavily on their main channel Facebook.

And the focus should also be on the creation and the utilisation of content of exceptional quality. This is the best way for Company X to differentiate from their competitor in social media and further enhance their brand and increase the amount of followers on social media. Company X should also constantly be ready to adapt with the possible changes in the social media platforms and if a new platform is to arise, for the potential utilisations of the new ones and the adjustments or changes in the existing ones. With dedicating a well-planned amount of resources to the usage and the utilisation of different channels, Company X can further enhance the brand, engage the customers, and most importantly improve their transparency and be a part of the conversation and the controversy that is the industry of cosmetic surgery.

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